Work or S

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new Masses

Star, Crescent and Cross

A Picture of Palestine

By LESTER COHEN

ROBERT FORSYTHE reviews the Soviet Film "Peasan

ALAN CALMER reports on the New Masses Novel Cont

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER reviews M. J. Olgin's "Trotsky

JAMES T. FARRELL reviews Nathan Asch's "The Valle

GRANVILLE HICKS reviews Robert Briffault's "Euro

Joseph Freeman Writes on Henri Barbusse

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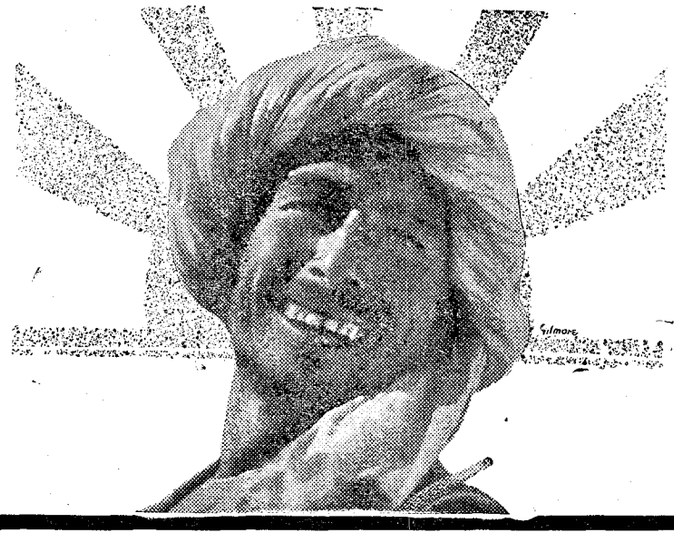

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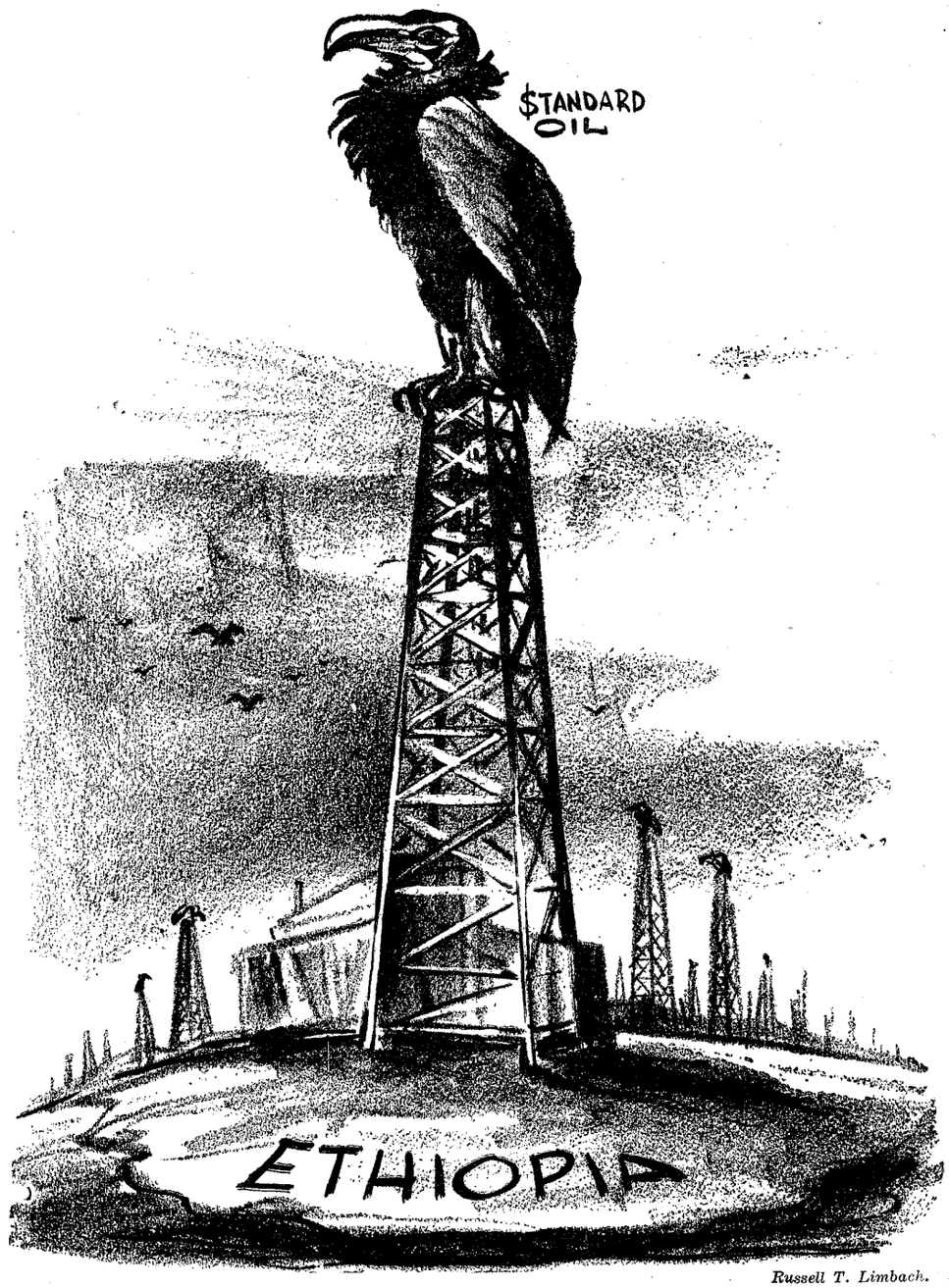
New Masses

SEPTEMBER 10, 1935

Collectivization Triumphant

IN SHARP contrast to the situation on our farms is the story told us in a dispatch just received from Joshua Kunitz in Moscow. He cables: "The papers are full of good news from the bread regions. It is clear that the collectives are beginning to function with unprecedented efficiency. In the Crimea, Asov and Black Sea regions, in the Dniepropetrovsky region in the northern Caucausus, everywhere the harvest is excellent and timely deliveries of grain are reported. That the northern Caucausus, onetime seat of the greatest kulak resistance to collectivization, is now in the vanguard in building well-organized, prospering collectives, is a fact of such importance as can scarcely be overestimated. Altogether, by August 26, 78 percent of all grain in the Soviet Union has been collected. The success of the collectives is amazing. In the first half of this year 833,600 new peasant households joined the collectives. New collectives to the number of 4,179 were organized."

BUT they do not live by bread alone, in the Soviet Union. Kunitz writes: "The school year has just started. During the last year education, like everything else, has made tremendous progress. One thousand new elementary schools have been established in the villages, 374 new high schools in industrial centers. One hundred million new text books have been put at the disposal of the schools. The school budget is three billion rubles. On August 29 Moscow celebrated the opening of 72 new large, well-equipped schools, all built in the incredibly brief time of 145 days. The twenty-first International Youth Day was the gayest, most colorful and inspiring ever seen here. It was celebrated throughout the Soviet Union on September 1, with more than half a million participating in Moscow. A striking contrast in mood was presented by Moscow's farewell to Henri Barbusse on Monday night, when practically the entire population filled the streets and followed the cortege to the White Russian station, where the remains were placed aboard a train for Paris."



Russell T. Limbach.

Mr. Green and the Teachers

WILLIAM GREEN went Red hunting again last week. In a long telegram to the convention of the American Federation of Teachers, an A. F. of L. affiliate, he demanded the ousting of "Communists" who, he said, have gained control of the New York local of the Federation. Mr. Green went far enough to suggest that unless his enemies were dropped from membership the convention would revoke the charter of the New York teachers. As usual in such cases the definition of a Communist is a very elastic one and the teachers who have been giving Mr. Green such concern profess a wide variety of political beliefs and opinions. It is noteworthy too that the majority of teachers gathered at Cleveland did not see eye to eye with the president of the A. F. of L. and refused to take action against the New Yorkers. The only result was an unfortunate decision of a minority to refuse to abide by the delegates. Their action may lead to a split in the Federation although the minority that withdrew have not yet taken that step. Mr. Green and his associates are fond of prattling about unity in the labor movement but their determined effort to rid the A. F. of L. of all who dissent from their rule is the real barrier to that unity. It is encouraging to note that the Red bogey is losing its power to frighten unions.

WHILE Mr. Green is wasting the workers' money sending long denunciatory telegrams, school officials are

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striving to stamp out all vestiges of teachers' rights to organize. A particularly aggravated case happened in Ashtabula, Ohio, recently. In 1932 Ashtabula teachers were forced to take a 10-percent "voluntary" wage cut and agree to suspension of automatic increases. In 1933 they were handed another wage slash, this time of 12 percent. Their discontent about these reductions was heightened when they learned that Superintendent M. S. Mitchell had been cheating on them and that his salary had not been reduced in the same proportion to which he had reduced teachers' salaries. As a result a group of teachers led by J. L. Spratley, Robert Stephens and E. B. Pendleton took the lead in forming an organization. The men, whose aggregate service in the school system totaled nineteen years, were fired. The expressed purposes of their organization were by no means revolutionary and did not even include proposals for wage increases or restoration of pay cuts. But nowadays any kind of organization is suspected; every attempt to improve conditions is a dire Red plot directed from the Kremlin.

Jim-Crow Colleges

LAST summer the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People obtained a court order directing the University of Maryland to admit a Negro student to its law school. University officials have been seeking a way to void the court order and last week they produced a letter from a Washington parent threatening to remove his daughters from the school if the Negro student is admitted. The letter bears all of the earmarks of an inspired document but it illustrates the lengths to which the state will go to evade its duty to provide equal educational facilities. Maryland does not provide professional schools for its Negro students despite numerous decisions holding that a state can maintain separate schools only if it provides equal opportunities for Negroes. It was on the basis of these holdings that the N.A.A.C.P. secured its order. The university is appealing from the decision and has asked the state supreme court to advance the hearing in order to secure final adjudication before school opens this fall. The case is an important one because if it is won it will play a large part in forcing the southern states to provide more than the bare formalities of education for Negro students.

When Jimmy Comes Home

THERE is rejoicing in Tammany Hall. Jimmy's coming home—Jimmy Walker under whose administration as mayor of New York every little tin box in the metropolitan area was filled to overflowing with graft. There is something of a victory for law and order in Jimmy's homecoming too. He left under a cloud with tax collectors yapping at his heels over a little matter of unpaid income taxes. But all has been forgiven and when Jimmy comes home ticker tape may drift down from skyscraper windows, flashlights may boom and bands may play. Of course it is the merest coincidence that Mr. Roosevelt's tax collectors decided to forgive Jimmy's sins right on the eve of an important national election when the President needs the support of Tammany Hall. Such mundane considerations are so far from the spirit of the New Deal that they're best not remembered. Only low, suspicious characters will choose to recall that other little coincidence when Mr. Roosevelt held a well-publicized inquisition on the eve of another national election in 1932 as a result of which Mr. Walker resigned in a panic and quit these shores for Europe. That was three long years ago. Much has been forgiven and forgotten since then. Meanwhile Andrew Mellon's lawyers have won a victory in their fight against the income tax collectors. Dutch Schultz is a free man. And now Jimmy is coming home. What a trio: Andrew Mellon, Dutch Schultz and Jimmy Walker!

Standardized Lynchings

LYNCHING procedure is becoming standardized. An unidentified Negro is accused of insulting or assaulting or attacking a white woman or of talking back to a white man. A Negro, any Negro, is arrested. Law enforcement officials decide to remove him to another jail for "safekeeping." A crowd intercepts the officials. The prisoner is seized, tortured, burned or shot to death. The sheriff gives out a statement saying that he was overpowered by the mob. A coroner's jury brings in a verdict of "death at the hands of parties unknown." The governor of the state promises an investigation. That's all. This order of events has been repeated twice in the past two weeks. In Mississippi it cost the lives of two young farmers and in Florida it brought death to a young worker. In neither case was there any proof that the men lynched were guilty of any crime. But of course lynching is not punishment for crime; it is an elaborate system designed to punish rebellious individuals and to teach the Negro people to "stay in their place." The Mississippi Negroes who were lynched were hanged in a Negro church yard, as an obvious warning. Trouble in the South now centers around resentment of Negro farmers and share croppers because of the wholesale theft of crop-reduction payments which was exposed in a report suppressed by the administration. In view of these facts it is not strange that federal anti-lynching legislation is not on the Roosevelt "must" list. One of the problems of the National Negro Congress will be the task of placing it there.

The Police Didn't Know

THE Chief of Police of Santa Rosa (a small town just north of San Francisco) was not "informed" that lawlessness would take place. The entire force failed to notice what was happening over in the residential section and later for an hour or so on the main street. The vigilantes went ahead with their party, tarred and feathered two alleged Communists because they had dared to organize workers and ran three other militants out of town. Now the police are unable to bring charges against leaders of the mob because no one has troubled to tell the Chief "officially" what happened. Of coure, he could not be expected to know anything of the incident—vigilantes merely shot more than twenty rounds at a house of one of the victims, tear-gassed the occupants (the possession of the bombs has not yet been explained), kidnaped them, beat and tortured them, then marched up and down the main street exhibiting their prisoners. Newspaper correspondents were allowed to accompany the mob so that the press could carry the details. But since the American Civil Liberties Union has announced that it is in the position to supply the names of twenty-seven of the gang, the Chief is all for letting the matter drop. Perhaps it was because the Mayor of Santa Rosa, George R. Caden, Assemblyman Scudder, Fred Cairns of the Chamber of Commerce, two members of the State Highway Patrol went along for the evening; perhaps because the Hearst press endorsed the proceedings. Demands on the State District Attor-

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ney are side-stepped because Mr. Webb also lacks "official notification." The result is that vigilantism is endorsed by state law-enforcement officials. The "Citizens Protective Committee" which issued a warning to all Communists about two weeks ago is allowed to continue its open terrorism. Against this, the indignant and militant action of all liberal and radical organizations, backed by the majority of workers can alone stop the growing menace of such flagrant lawlessness.

WITH the exception of the Hearst press, California newspapers condemned the incident. The San Franciso Chronicle especially caused a mild stir by stating "America owes it to itself to demonstrate that democracy does not need to surrender to fascism in order to be safe against Communists." In the light of The Chronicle's open approval of former vigilante actions, liberals congratulate each other on what looks like a reform of this labor-baiting paper. It is, therefore, particularly interesting to learn from most reliable sources that the newspapers are preparing to begin a new anti-Red drive—a terrific "scandal" to procure which the press has spent large sums of money and great effort. There will be the usual "legal" proof, the usual revelations of "secret documents." The attack will be directed against the Communist Party with the aim of raising the Red scare and hitting at the rank and file of the waterfront unions just as they face a new strike. The Santa Rosa affair was a little flagrant; the newspapers prefer an attack that will boost circulation and at the same time allow them to continue their protestations of liberalism.

Death in the Black Belt

LED by the Sharecroppers' Union, Lowndes County, Alabama cotton pickers are on strike. Their demands are modest enough. They are asking for a dollar a hundred pounds for cotton pickers working at piece rates and for a dollar a day for ten hours work by wage workers. Relief workers are being urged to refuse to break the strike and to demand 20 cents an hour for a forty-hour week. Southern landowners have met these demands with an unexampled reign of terror. At the present time the focus of the trouble is on the Hardie Bell plantation where Sheriff R. E. Woodruff shot and killed one strike leader and wounded another. Other strikers have been thrown into jail. Montgomery newspapers term the strike a "rebellion" and a "Communist insurrection" and persist in printing stories to the effect that "Red organizers" are murdering the croppers. Working hand in glove with the plantation owners are two Negroes, one a government extension agent and the other the principal of a Negro high school. The trouble in Lowndes follows a flare-up in Perry County where another Negro sharecropper was killed last month. Albert Jackson, union secretary who is being sought by authorities on insurrection charges, is appealing for protests to be sent to the governor of Alabama and local officials demanding the upholding of constitutional rights for strikers.

IT WAS against this kind of "insurrection" and "rebellion" that the recent Alabama sedition law was aimed. Alabama authorities are particularly determined to crush the Sharecroppers' Union because it persists in organizing both white and Negro croppers and wage workers. Moved by protests from all over the country and the practically unanimous opposition of even reactionary southern newspapers, Governor Bibb Graves vetoed the act. Rejoicing over his veto was short lived, however, when it was discovered that he had "overlooked" provisions of the state law and delayed his veto one day too long. The bill automatically became law and now any person possessing more than one copy of a "revolutionary" book, periodical or cartoon is liable to severe penalties. Since the most harmless literature is "revolutionary" in Alabama freedom of press has been virtually destroyed.

Work Relief and Fascism

ROOSEVELT'S program of work for relief clients is more and more revealing its true aims in driving down wage standards all over the country. Even the conservative New York State Federation of Labor now recognizes that. What is not so apparent, however, is the gradual drift to more open fascist forms in the work program. The latest step is the attempt to use transient labor in labor camps and concentration camps for the benefit of private employers in the New York State flood area. The newspapers dress up as an act of emergency and mercy the job of rehabilitating the flooded areas of New York State. They fail to mention that transients are to be put in labor camps receiving the magnificent wage of $1 a week and subsistence to rehabilitate, repair and reconstruct the flood damages on *private property*. This is a step away from the actual donating of their services to private employers, as Hitler has been doing for two years. This aspect of the work program is steadily creeping forward.

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A couple of weeks ago the government took a major step in this direction when it permitted the Rural Electrification Administration to make loans to private utility companies for electrification in the countryside to employ relief labor *at relief rates*. While the government makes a tremendous cry about the utilities, at the same time it provides them with money and cheap labor to carry on their work. Thousands of workers throughout the country will thus actually be employed in private industry not at prevailing rates of pay, but at the government's below-subsistence "security" wage.

IT IS this aspect of the work program which explains the curious reluctance of business leaders throughout the country to criticize the Works Progress Administration. It is quite significant that the criticism of "work," as opposed to the dole, competing with private industry has suddenly dropped out of the picture. It is more significant in view of the decided standard of the reactionary business and industrial leaders at the highly important White Sulphur Springs conference early this year. The explanation for this silence is simple: the Roosevelt Administration has demonstrated to industry and capital that work relief is an even more efficient weapon than the dole in driving down wages in private industry. Prophetically, it may be said that the Rural Electrification Administration's move is probably the beginning of a wholesale advance in the same direction. It will not be long before the lamented Hoover's technique of loans to industry through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (which, incidentally, is still going strong) will be adapted by the Relief Administration. Huge loans will be made to private industry which in return will "promise" to employ relief clients at the security wage.

Hull's Statement

THE note to Soviet Russia of August 25 alleging violations of the Litvinov agreement growing out of the sessions of the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, drew the expected reply. The Soviet Foreign Office rejected the complaint as unfounded. The tone of the reply left no doubt to anybody concerned that the Soviet government has no intentions of interfering with Comintern activities, thus incidentally giving the lie to the Trotsky fable that the Litvinov agreement marked the end of the Third International. This categorical rejection of the American note put the State Department in something of a quandary. It could either reply and set out what it considered violations of the agreement or content itself with issuing a statement and letting the matter rest there. Neither course appealed to Mr. Roosevelt and his advisors. For all of their luster American diplomats have no desire to engage in a long diplomatic controversy with the Soviet Union that would certainly upset still further delicate international relations. And despite the shouts of glee that went up from Soviet-baiters the reaction to the August 25 note left no doubt that the Amerian people were not enthusiastic over the prospect of a rupture of relations with the U.S.S.R. On the other hand the mere issuanc of an official statement should go far o prove charges that the August 25 note was intended far more for home consumption than for serious consideration abroad.

AFTER a series of conferences, participated in by the President himself, the State Department chose what it considered the best way out of a bad situation and Secretary Hull Sunday issued a long statement supposed to bolster American charges. The Hull statement is a reiteration of the August 25 note, wholly lacking in evidence to support the original charges. The impression remains that Mr. Roosevelt is trying to make political capital out of the incident and is seeking to strike back at those who have been charging him with being sympathetic to Socialism. The strategy isn't working very well and Hearst papers are still railing at the "Asiatic party of Karl Marx and Franklin Delano Roosevelt." That alone will not deter the plans for a drive against left-wing elements. Newspapers are already speculating about such a move. The New York Times' correspondent reported Monday that:

> Some conjecture has been heard as to whether the whole incident was likely to be used by the State Department to ask legislation at the next session of Congress to curb activities of Communists, but no intimation of that kind has been made by officials.

The reassurance need not be taken too seriously; such drives always get under way with fanfare of denials. The possibilities are that the outbreak of labor troubles next year will usher in one of the most bitter struggles for the rights of free speech, free assemblage and a free press since the post-war days.

Oil Is Trumps

SIMULTANEOUSLY with the signing of the Neutrality Bill came the report that Emperor Haile Selassie had ceded half of Ethiopia to the Standard Oil Company, backed by British firms. The Emperor undoubtedly made this move as a desperate attempt to check an Italian invasion by playing one robber gang against another. It seems to have had the opposite effect; by exposing the imperialist program behind England's high-toned pacifist professions it has strengthened Italy's hand. Britain's noble concern for Ethiopian independence simmers down to a practical concern in a share of the loot. England must be sure of a say in the final disposition of whatever exploitable resources Ethiopia may yield. Now, with American interests directly involved, England can expect the Roosevelt government to take a more judicious view of the situation and be willing (of course, in the interest of world peace) to support England's front against the strengthening of a rival imperialist power—in this instance Italy.

THAT the Neutrality Bill is meaningless is generally conceded. Once American interests become involved, no resolution can prevent an irresistible pressure being brought on the administration to protect American investments and future commercial prospects. England, fearing isolation now that France exhibits open reluctance to take action against Mussolini, turns for support to America—always vitally interested in oil deposits or any other natural resources. And while diplomats break the ground for a new world conflict, war ministries of all great powers attempt to frighten their rivals by displays of arms. England reinforces its fleet in the Mediterranean and even considers sending the entire Atlantic fleet into those waters; Italy responds by holding naval maneuvers near the English base of Malta while the army maneuvers on the Austrian frontier. Germany and France conduct war games; this country mobilized the largest peace-time army in its history for sham battles in New York. World war is openly prepared —with Ethiopia's territorial integrity the pawn and oil, mineral deposits and territory, the stakes.

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THE HONEST BROKER

Russell T. Limbach.

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Homage to Barbusse

JOSEPH FREEMAN

THOSE of us who had the privilege of hearing Henri Barbusse in America can never forget the moral and intellectual grandeur of the man, nor his impassioned eloquence, nor his purity of heart.

He talked to vast audiences of workers, accustomed to orators of every kind; he addressed small groups of intellectuals, sensitively critical of the rhetorical arts. Always men and women suddenly became still and reverent before the pale, gaunt figure of the artist who was both prophet and fighter. For the most part they did not understand French, the language in which he spoke to them. Yet, before the translator explained his words, they were profoundly moved by his spirit.

The very appearance of the man evidenced his spiritual integrity. You sensed it in the tall, fragile body with the stooping shoulders; the vibrant sincerity of his voice; the long, outstretched arm, quivering with illness and emotion; the thin, aristocratic face, ravaged with internal conflict. Here was a man who was literally giving his life to the cause of human emancipation, and giving it gladly, with sublime courage and joy.

It was my good fortune to accompany Barbusse on his last speaking tour in the United States, through a dozen cities from New York to Chicago. We were together every day for a month on the platform, on trains, in hotels. Everywhere, in public and in private, his mind was concentrated on one object. He was sixty years old. He was very ill. His face was lined with spiritual suffering and bodily exhaustion. But from the moment he awoke to the moment he fell asleep, he labored indefatigably for the all-absorbing goal; every ounce of energy, feeling and action went into the organization of men and women of every creed in the world-wide united front against fascism and war.

For this goal Barbusse found no task too small or too big. After stirring large audiences in New York, Philadelphia, Washington and Pittsburgh, he came to a small Pennsylvania town where his meeting was badly organized. The committee in charge was inexperienced. There had been no placards, no advertising, no publicity. We found the dimly-lit hall half empty; only a handful of people had come. The organizers were embarrassed.

"There's no use wasting Barbusse on a couple of dozen people," they said. "Let's call this off."

"Non, non, non!" Barbusse protested. "Even if there were only three people I would speak. Our message must reach every one who will listen."

Sick with fever, fatigued with work and travel, he spoke for more than an hour. By the time we reached Chicago he was gravely ill. Here the meeting was well arranged. More than twelve thousand people were expected to fill the vast Coliseum. The meeting was four hours away and Barbusse lay in bed febrile and sallow. Professor Harry Dana, his translator, said:

"He was wounded three times in the war. He has never been really well since. His lungs are bad; his throat is in danger. Let's call a doctor."

The doctor came. He forbade Barbusse to speak.

"You are a very sick man," he said. "You must not leave your bed."

Barbusse sat up tensely: "Twelve thousand people are coming. They cannot be disappointed. I must speak."

"If you do," the doctor said, "I shall not be responsible for your life."

"It is my duty to speak," Barbusse said.

That evening, trembling with fever, wet with the perspiration of severe illness, he dressed and went to the meeting. The immense auditorium, scene of Republican and Communist nominating conventions, was jammed. Barbusse disregarded our advice to cut his speech; he went through the whole of it. Three people, three thousand, three million: all who would listen must hear the truth: "It is necessary to reveal to the inert, wavering, uncertain public opinion whither men are being led."

You looked at Barbusse on the platform, at committee meetings, across the aisle of a dusty train, in a hotel room dictating letters, speeches and articles to his secretary, receiving delegations of war veterans, Negroes, Latin Americans, men of letters, and you saw a mighty spirit that had worn the flesh down to the bone.

TO every audience in every city, whether his discourse was on fascism or war or literature, Barbusse said:

"I have the honor of being a Communist."

When he said it, simply, without affectation of any kind, every audience burst into thunderous applause. Even those who did not share his social views felt the heroic qualities of mind and heart which had enabled him to resolve his internal conflicts through reason, will and science into iron belief, inflexible purpose.

This large protagonist of all that was best in European culture had marched at tremendous cost through the No Man's Land that separates the new world from the old. Yet he never counted the cost. He felt that the proletariat, whose militant ranks he had joined, had given him far more than he gave it. It is not for the workers to go to the intellectuals, he told us; the intellectuals must go to the workers. He said this out of an experience more turbulent and anguished, perhaps, than that of the trenches. He was the first great poet to tell the truth about the world war. Others spoke up after him, revealing the stupid horror of armed conflict. It was his merit among the leading writers of our age that he followed that surface truth to its inexorable conclusion, and broke completely with the society which makes war inevitable. Where others recoiled from the trenches into a sentimental pacifism which obliquely encourages the very evil it would abate, Barbusse hewed his way from appearance to reality. He saw that the class struggle, by abolishing classes abolishes war.

THE transition of Barbusse from art for art's sake to revolutionary art, from bourgeois individualism to collective revolutionary action is itself one of the sagas of contemporary literature. It is the saga of a moral and intellectual choice among the conflicting forces of our time. In Barbusse's social background there was nothing external to compel him into the camp of the proletariat. He came of a respectable middle-class family in the suburbs of Paris. His father was a French writer from the Midi; his mother the daughter of an English farmer; his father-in-law the distinguished French poet Catulle Mendès. Until the world war, when he was forty years old, he was—as he himself told us—an "intellectual, a bourgeois writer like many another," rather individualistic, and full of that "vast ignorance which was unfortunately and for too long a time the portion of the intellectuals."

The war found him a middle-aged man of letters, with a creditable university career behind him, success in journalism, a published volume of verse, a poetry prize, a reputation as the author of two novels, a book on painting, a collection of short stories. Because of this comfortable position in bourgeois society, he compared himself to John Reed and Emile Zola.

"John Reed," he reminded us in Chicago, "did not grow up out of a revolutionary background. He was a talented journalist, an intellectual of bourgeois origin. But when his sincerity and honesty as a man found themselves in contact with events he became a revolutionist. That is what happened to Emile Zola, too. For a long time Zola held himself jealously aloof from social and political questions. But when the nobility and fairness of Zola's character found themselves in contact with the Dreyfus case, with the baseness and shamefulness of French anti-semitism and militarism he became a revolutionist. That is what happened to me—if I may compare myself in one respect with such distinguished personalities—when I came in contact with war."

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Nobility and fairness were ingrained in Barbusse's character before the war. His novel *L'Enfer* was pervaded with a sentimental pacifism which managed, nevertheless, to puncture ruthlessly the myth of patriotism. But the poet did not yet realize the full depths of the contemporary hell. In 1914 he enlisted as a private in the French infantry. The war completed his education as a man; in the trenches he came to understand much, "above all the wide ramifications of the evils of contemporary society."

He conveyed that understanding to us in the most terrific of all war books, *Under Fire,* which appeared in 1916. Amidst the roar of official lies rose this clear voice speaking the truth about the monstrosities of the battlefield, "the slow-motion nightmare of the interminable war" in which human beings, degraded and slaughtered in a conflict which was not theirs awoke to ask: *why are we fighting?*

The military authorities denounced the man who dared to tell the truth about the war, but the book spread like wildfire through the world. Men were in the mood to hear realities from one who had earned the right to utter them. Barbusse had invented nothing; his art was epic, it turned the souls of men, because it was not severed from life. The writer was a common soldier fighting by the side of common soldiers in the dugouts. He had been wounded three times, invalided three times, returned three times to the front, decorated for bravery under fire. They offered to make him an officer; he refused; he wanted to remain a common soldier. As an artist he dealt with experience; but his specific experience was remote from the tawdry amours of bohemia, from the provincial preoccupations of the philistine; it was remote from the glittering cafes of Paris where the officers and politicians toasted each other and their mistresses to a painless glory. The artist remained a man in the muck and blood and anguish of the battlefield and there saw the truth.

THERE were certain intellectuals who opposed armed conflict *before* the war and *after* the war, safe interims for them between orgies of patriotism. Barbusse declared war against war while the conflict was still on. In the early months of 1917, shortly after the appearance of *Under Fire,* he collaborated with a group of soldiers invalided from the front in organizing an ex-servicemen's organization known as the Association Republicain des Anciens Combattants. The group set itself two aims: to defend the particular interests of war veterans and victims of the war, and also "to wage thenceforth, with all their might, a relentless war against war, in order that future generations should not have to endure what we have endured, in order that the lying promise made to us, the promise that this war would be the last war, might through the sheer force of things —that is, through the sheer force of *men*— become a reality."

Photograph by Irving Lerner

HENRI BARBUSSE, 1874-1935

Barbusse took the initiative in extending this association to include all countries; he created an international organization of war veterans. In retrospect, he explained to us in America that he did this *because* he was a literary man, because he was a witness of the war who had given his testimony in writing. The writer who identified himself with mankind fused his artistic and practical gifts into one unit of energy directed toward a social goal.

The international veterans' association met in Geneva toward the close of 1920. The soldier-delegates were French, German, Austrian, English, Italian. On the battlefield they had hunted each other down like mad beasts; now they shook hands fraternally, determined never again to fight one another. They declared it was not enough to fraternize in the trenches; they must learn to fraternize before the outbreak of the next war.

The war had completed Barbusse's education as a man; he had learned to see beyond its horrors to their causes. The charter which the veterans drew up in Geneva specified that to be effective the struggle against war must be waged in the social domain,

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against the basic determinants of war; these are rooted in the economic structure of society; the struggle against war can be successful only if it is a struggle against capitalism.

Shortly afterward, Barbusse realized that the cause of the soldiers who suffer and die "not for their own interests but to further the interests of the big parasites and the big businessmen, was the same as that of the workers who labor wearily at their tasks and die for others." He saw the common soldier as the symbol of the whole proletariat. He saw, too, that the cause of the intellectual who has retained his full moral and mental integrity is the cause of the soldier, the cause of the proletariat.

This vision first took literary shape, as was natural for an artist. In *Clarté,* Barbusse's third great novel, the hero, disillusioned by the world war, saw a magnificent vision of a universal revolution in the mind of man and the creation of a world republic.

But, as always, Barbusse complemented poetry with action. The novel *Clarté* (Light) was followed by the organization of the same name. In a letter which Barbusse wrote me last year he explained the Clarté group as follows: It was to be an international movement with a number of local sections; its purpose was to prepare for a revolutionary ideology and to draw intellectuals into the workers' movement. In essence "the work of this movement consisted in elaborating a rapprochement between bourgeois idealism and Marxism, a rapprochement which was achieved—which could only be achieved—through the elimination of vague and abstract formulas from bourgeois idealism."

IN America we remembered the Clarté movement well, and its impact upon certain intellectuals of our country. We first heard of it when several of us had independently, on the basis of our American experience, arrived at the conviction that a gulf divided those intellectuals who supported the exploiters and those who fought on the side of the exploited. But the problem of organizing the intellectual allies of the proletariat was unclear. In western Europe, nearer to the October Revolution in space and itself torn by class war on a more developed scale than America, the problem was posed by Clarté. At first that organization was vague in principle, confused in composition.

That was possible as long as Clarté suffered from the illusion that the intelligentsia was a caste apart. By the spring of 1921 it gave up the pose of being an "international of intellect," and became more modestly "a center of international revolutionary education."

Barbusse grasped the principle formulated by Lenin without, perhaps, knowing of it at the time: if the engineer is ever to come to Communism, he will do so not in the same way as the underground worker, the agitator or the writer, but through the portals of his science; similarly the agronomist will come to Communism in his own way; and this holds good for every technician and scientist in his own field.

Barbusse applied this principle to literature and art. At first he erred in assuming that an organization of revolutionary intellectuals could function effectively in the interest of the working-class without "a previous entente with the parties"; but he soon abandoned the notion that such a group could be totally outside and beyond the political struggle. Experimenting with Clarté, he became a pioneer in the movement, world-wide today, which unites all sincere intellectuals with the party of the workers in its struggle against reaction and war.

IN the long run, the revolutionary movement did for Barbusse on one level what it had done for John Reed on another; it unified his creative and practical gifts; reason and will, imagination and action, poetry and politics became fused toward a single purpose. The man who wrote *Chains, The Hangman—In the Balkans, Force, Jesus Elevation* and *Zola* was the man who edited Communist newspapers, led the association of war veterans, headed Clarté, was in the front ranks of the Amsterdam anti-war congress, and finally leader of a world-wide organization against war and fascism. Little scribblers crawled into ivory towers, terrified lest the revolution rob them of their artistic "freedom," of their "sacred" egoes. This giant among giants, recognized by all as one of the outstanding writers of the contemporary world, gladly acknowledged that both his individuality and his talent developed in and through the struggle for a classless society: *I have the honor of being a Communist.*

In one of his last talks to us in America, he said:

"Let the artist remain an artist. Let every man do the work he is best fit to do. The law of the division of labor demands it. It is not a question of pinning professions of political faith on the pages of books. But the writer must be on the side of the exploited against the exploiters, on the side of the oppressed against the oppressors, unmistakably and honestly on their side. Let literature remain a courageous advance guard—a literature of war. Let there be books correcting the errors of society and creating justice. You must continue to write them until men establish a logical society in which war and social reaction and fascism have disappeared, and are remembered only as hideous spectres of the grim past."

These words, addressed to American writers, are a just summary of Barbusse's own life and work, which he carried on to the last under incredible difficulties. We saw him off on the pier, his face extremely pale and haggard above his grey muffler. Later his secretary wrote me from Paris:

"One hour after our arrival, Barbusse plunged into his material on Stalin. I thought that at last he would be able to work in peace and to write two great books—the biography and the novel. Several days later he fell ill with fever, worse than Chicago. The doctor said it was pleurisy. There were several painful days; then three weeks of rest. Barbusse is convalescing. This will be long and laborious, but his resistance is so great that one can look forward to the future with tranquillity. I do not need to tell you that in spite of his fever he did not cease working for a single day; he dictated continually, preoccupied with the grave moments through which the proletariat of the entire world is passing."

That was early last year. This summer he again ignored medical advice; he went to Moscow aware of the risks such a journey involved to his delicate health. He did not cease working for a single day, preoccupied to the end with the cause of the proletariat which he identified with the cause of mankind. Years of labor and suffering had broken the body; the will remained indomitable to the very last. Like John Reed, with whose life he compared his own, he died at his post in the first Socialist Republic, vanguard of that just world he envisioned, for the realization of which he gave his strength to its ultimate atom.

REVOLUTIONARY workers and intellectuals the world over, all to whom the struggle for human emancipation is dear, who value what is true and noble in art, honor the memory of this great poet and courageous fighter. Those who knew him in daily contact add personal love to homage. We remember a man unique for the complete continuity of public and private life. Now and then the famous writer is one thing in public, another in private. Barbusse had no gap. The same lofty candor and simplicity which marked him on the platform and on the printed page was his in the most casual conversation, his most trivial act.

It was this integrity which won your love as well as admiration. He was not one of those writers who think they serve the proletariat best by abandoning intellectual discipline and sliding into a fake folk-speech. Trained in the great tradition of the French classics, Barbusse wrote in that tradition for the most obscure working-class paper; he addressed proletarian audiences in the style of Danton addressing the Convention because that style was natural to him, because it seemed to fit the high aspirations which he uttered, because the workers were entitled to the best that was in him; and that was the style he used in his simplest personal letters.

The dreams of the artist, the agony of the soldier, the faith and reason and will of the Communist had been melted into a mighty whole in the crucible of his intense and noble nature. Whether you saw him stirring thousands with his revolutionary message, or talking with an individual worker or war veteran or writer, you could not help thinking: there is a man, there is a poet, there is a Bolshevik.

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Cross, Crescent and Star

A Picture of Palestine

LESTER COHEN

PALESTINE is a very small country, 336 Palestines could fit into the United States. Even from shipboard, while docked at Haifa wharves, it seems a disjointed land, English officers coming aboard with Jewish and Arab assistants, officers and assistants going check and double-check over the landing list, Arab and Jewish money changers vying with each other, the money stamped in three languages: English, Hebrew, Arabic, the piastre with its hole in the middle, looking like a plugged nickel . . . all about us signs in three languages, "No Smoking" in three languages, "This Way Out" in three languages . . . taxi drivers hollering in three languages, each making a bid for his own sort. I think back to White Russia, the signs in four languages, a convenience and an expression of new liberties, but this hollering in three languages a competition on a racial basis, an English taxi driver yapping at Eden, a Jewish driver yapping at me, an Arab being the only silent and reflective one, we take him, he seems very much surprised.

He starts off, shaking his head to himself, and almost going into a camel. I ask if he isn't feeling well, he says it is hot, which reminds me that we are thirsty. I ask him to pull up at a drink stand down the way. He does, but— "It is Arab place, sair," says he . . . well, I say, is that anything against it? He says no, we get soda pop, I ask if he will have one, his brow wrinkles in puzzlement. I take it the palefaces have rarely seemed considerate, he is very thirsty, between gulps "Thank you sair, please sair," says he. . . .

All about us Arabs in long white robes, black hair hanging down the sides of their faces — lean, brown, handsome, unfriendly faces—coarse white cloths over the heads and falling down the shoulders, brilliant black eyes staring, staring . . . some of the Arabs swinging canes, standing still but swinging canes, ragged and unkempt, but swinging canes. . . .

Back into the car, out of Haifa. . . . We pull up at a crossroad, we must wait till a caravan goes by, knobby legged camels, jerkily ambling through the dust . . . and out to Nazareth, which you feel may be different from the other villages. But it isn't, a few small white structures, shepherds tending flocks, some palms, scrubby fields, then desert, clear blue sky above, jagged blue hills beyond. . . .

And now we are driving into Jerusalem, winding up narrow newish streets, past hundreds of Jews in long black gabardines and wide beaver hats, the costume they were forced to wear in the medieval ghettos, through centuries of wearing, the costume seems to have endeared itself, and with it corkscrew curls down the sides of the face, the shoulders crooked up in the stoop of fear and sorrow, hands folded over the small of the back, feet shuffling along *schlipsh-schlopsh, schlipsh-schlopsh*—and so they have trained their children in this Jerusalem where they might have a new life if they could come into a new point of view, but no, hundreds of kids of five and six in long black gabardines, wide black hats pressed down over the ears, corkscrew curls, little hands behind, little shoulders crooked up, little feet in *schlipsh-schlopsh.*

I was raised on the tough streets of a tough city. I don't mind tough streets, wherever I have been I have gone looking for what was tough, toughness interests me, I take it as a symptom of a diseased civilization . . . but I never came across anything like this, dark, pitch dark, narrow cobbled streets, streets of stairs winding down, down, sometimes a streak of light glimmering over a trickle of blood between the cobbles, dead-end streets, too dark to find the way out. Suddenly a circle of eyes, eyes under white cowls, Arab eyes, staring, staring . . . vanishing on silent feet, harsh Arabic words crackling the dark, the only clue to the way out. . . . I don't know that I scare easier than most, but Jerusalem at night scares me. I think it must scare most of the European residents, the only ones abroad were the Arabs . . . only two spots of light in the Jerusalem night, two Arab cafes, each across from the other, no side walls, rails between the three or four floors, the effect like skeleton scenery, a group of Arabs in dirty white gowns, each wound about with the tubing of the *nargile,* small cups of Turkish coffee before them, the musicians making *eechy-screechy,* and the sultry night pressing down, pressing down, choking them, one by one, into slumber.

NEXT morning we set forth. I buy a map of Jerusalem. The map shows two cities, the old and the new. Our hotel, the Grand Mufti's house, and the Y.M.C.A. are in the new city, the more venerated and historic places are in the old.

More or less in the center of the map is the wall of the old city. All roads lead to that wall, the Bethlehem Road, the Jaffa Road, the Jericho Road, the other roads. Each road comes to a gate, the gates are in the wall. There is the Jaffa Gate, the Zion Gate, the Dung Gate, the Golden Gate, St. Stephen's Gate, Herod's Gate, the Damascus Gate, the New Gate. Within those gates are the four quarters: Christian Quarter, Armenian Quarter, Jewish Quarter, Moslem Quarter. Within those four quarters are the religious crossroads of the western world.

We put our map away, approach the Jaffa Gate, go down the streets of stairs, narrow streets, at times your outstretched hands can touch from wall to wall, the stairs rudely hewn into stone, down, down, this dank and sodden way, it is almost like going down into a colossal well—and it is, the well out of which, for thousands of years, Jews, Christians, Mohammedans have drawn their spiritual sustenance, the greatest well of blood, belief and tears the world has ever known. As you go down, down, the streets of stairs, dirty, filthy, stinking, damp and bloody stairs, you see breaks in the wall to the right, breaks in the wall to the left . . . butcher shops, grocery shops, eating shops, leather shops, wine shops, holy goods shops. Here, in dirt, misery, filth, squalor and disease are the hewers of wood, the drawers of water, the hammerers of the gold, the makers of crosses, crescents, phylacteries, whips—and the butchers, Arab butchers, Jewish butchers, Christian butchers, splitting open carcasses, hanging out the skins to dry, cutting away the pink ribbons of the lamb mouths, chopping off the lamb heads . . . the lamb heads, their glassy eyes staring, rolling into the streets of stairs, blood of the lamb heads streaking the stones, wine of the wine skins dripping on the stones, Arab water carriers, in sandals, sloshing by, wooden yokes across their shoulders, wooden pails swinging from the yokes, water dripping from the pails, making a mess of blood, water, wine and dung . . . and the sound of the beating of gold, the whipmaker cracking his whips, the *muezzin* calling to prayer, a black Copt priest jingling his silver beads, an Arab beggar hollering for *baksheesh.* . . .

EDEN said she wanted to get out of all this, perhaps we could go to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. I took out the map, we looked at it, as we were wondering whether to go this way or that, a young Jew stepped up to us, he wore European clothes, and in very good English—"May I help you?" said he.

We told him where we wanted to go—"Isn't it strange," said he, "I was just going there myself, if you like I shall show you the way." We thanked him, and as we went along he kept looking at me—"But aren't you a Jew?" said he. I said yes. Now he looked at Eden, "But your wife is Gentile," said he. I said yes. "Oh I understand," said he, "you came to see the things of the Jews, and your wife wishes to see the Christian things." We said we hadn't divided it up that way. He nodded, but his eyes

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remained puzzled and gray—"And here we are," said he.

And indeed, here we were, before a not very imposing church, making way through Arab loiterers, our companion holding open the door for us, "If you please," said he, and by his manner it was plain that he too was coming in—"It is quite some time since I have been," said he. And now his gray eyes looked into mine—"Don't say anything about being a Jew." I paused and asked why—"They won't let Jews in," said he. I asked about the times he had been—"Oh that's different," said he, and with the unexplained hanging about us . . . we went in.

It was quite gloomy, a few dark forms stood swinging censers, others stood murmuring before the flames of small candles.

The young man beside us said "back soon," and disappeared. A priest nudged me, put out his hand, I put something in it, he went away.

I thought back to the little I knew of this place, the tomb of Christ was here, I remembered how Joseph had claimed the body, wrapped it in linen and spices, put it in a sepulchre that had been hewn out of a rock. . . .

We heard voices. By now our eyes were accustomed to the gloom, we could see several priests squabbling, one had a white face, one a brown face, one a black face, the squabble brought them nearer the candle flames, we could see them pushing each other, a fourth figure in Arab caftan came over to them, prevailed upon them to keep the peace . . . oh yes, this Church of the Holy Sepulchre was in the keeping of European, Asiatic and African sects, the sects were known to quarrel, that's why there was a Mohammedan keeper of the keys. . . .

And now our young man returned with a Greek priest, the priest beckoned to us, we followed, "You'll have to hurry," the young man said, "they're about to lock up." Before I could ask why the priest held candles out to us. . . "Buy candles," said the young man, we did, the priest lighted them, indicated that we were to stoop and enter a low crypt . . . we were in the Holy Sepulchre.

Imagine a cell, a small cell, hardly big enough to live in, just big enough to die in, a stone couch to the side, and there, after the agonies and doubts, lay Jesus Christ . . . if ever he lay here at all. The cell didn't seem 2,000 years old, there was a regularity to the masonry . . . the priest, as if primed for doubters, pointed to the stone couch, nodded, stroked his long black beard, stuck out his palm, I put something in it, he started to back out, I was about to stoop and head out, the young man grabbed me, swung me around, backed me out. . . .

Something in the young man's manner made us realize he was a guide—"Let me have your candles," said he. We gave him the candles, he blew them out, put them back on the pile. "Hurry, hurry," said he, looking at the luminous dial of his watch, "you just have time to see the place of the

ASKENAZI JEW *Saul Raskin*

Crucifixion"—and with that he rushed us upstairs, " this way, watch your step," said he. The priest stuck out a candle—"Buy another candle," said our guide, "see the notches in the stone."

We bought a candle, the priest lit it, held it down, we looked . . . there were notches in the stone. Above on the wall—iconry, gold iconry, emblazoned with diamonds and heaped with gold watches, bracelets, earrings, stickpins, diamond hatpins. . . .

I thought of the simple ways of Jesus Christ, the love of the poor, the tenderness toward lepers, the willingness to have wine at the wedding, the great heart, the great goodness, the great poetry of the man . . . celebrated here by watch chains and signet rings.

I looked at Eden, her face was pale and prim, as she stared at the showcase full of watches she seemed like a Puritan maiden beholding the idolatries. . . "It isn't true," she said, "Christ wasn't crucified here, it was on the hill of Golgotha." The guide said this was the hill of Golgotha. Eden said how did anyone know, Jerusalem had been pillaged, burned, rent by quake . . . the Sepulchre couldn't have been so near the place of Crucifixion, it was in a garden. This, said the guide, was the garden. The notches, said Eden, couldn't have been the real notches, it would be difficult to get three crosses so close together . . . as she spoke the luminous brown eyes of the Greek priest hovered over her, he smiled to her and wisps of black beard streaked his gleaming teeth, at the moment he looked like a ham actor playing Rasputin—then from without we heard the *muezzin* calling to prayer, the priest pointed toward the sound as if saying: there it is—"Come on," said our guide, "hurry up, you'll be locked in"—and from below we heard the banging of doors and clanking of chains, the Mohammedan keeper of the keys had to go to the Mosque of Omar, knock his head against the stones and say: "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His Prophet."

And so out we went, stood again in the light of day, surrounded by Arab beggars demanding *baksheesh,* a friar went ploshing by in yellow sandals and coarse brown gown, there was a processional of pallid Dutch nuns in white windmill hats, a Syrian wanted to sell a cane for ten cents, our guide suggested the Wailing Wall, a lamb's head went *kerplunk* in the wine-mud-blood of the cobbles, spattering on a torn Arab caftan embroidered in gold. . . .

And we went down the streets of stairs, the old streets, named after the old agonies: Via Dolorosa, Street of the Chain . . . and here we were at the Wailing Wall. It is all that is left of Solomon's Temple. You can still see some of the original stones. These stones are sacred to orthodox Jews. The stones above them, which are built onto a mosque, are sacred to Mohammedans. Every now and again this makes for trouble, and a policeman is stationed nearby. Today's policeman happened to be a Jew, he was seated on a camp chair, white helmet tilted down, a thick volume in his hands. I looked over his shoulder, wondering what a Jewish policeman reads—it was an anthology of short stories.

OVER at the Wailing Wall were a number of Turks, old time Turks such as we had seen in Rhodes, red pantaloons, black socks, yellow slippers, silk skullcaps. I thought it nice of them to stand here wailing for the Jews, I wondered if the Jews had gone in for hired mourners, it made me a little sad, this Turk wheezy-sneezy didn't come from the heart, I missed that old time *myeh.*

The guide admitted that the *myeh* was somewhat run down, but after a while, he said, it might pick up.

"Well," I said, "it is an adequate performance, considering that they are Turks—but where are the Jews?"

"These," said the guide, pointing to the Turks, "are the Jews."

"Oh no," said I, "you can't fool me, I know a Jew when I see one."

"These are Algerian Jews," said he.

Well, I didn't know, maybe they were. They looked like stooges from *The Garden of Allah.* They were now joined by an old Turk in similar costume, but there was one thing about him that inclined me to believe he was a Jew. On a hot, cloudless day he carried a tightly wound umbrella. He had a fierce light in his eye, he began hollering at the others, I came nearer, couldn't make out a word he said, some Hebraio-Algerio-Ladino dialect perhaps, but whatever the language, this was exhortation and whatever it was the old guy was after, he wanted it bigger and better—and here it came, tears, real tears, tears running down the faces, hands beating against the wall, cryings, shak-

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ings, hollerings, the old guy leading them on, a sort of cheer leader of the wailers, no doubt hollering: *"Myeh!* Give me *myeh!* You call this *myeh,* hah? You should've heard how in the olden days we are giving *myeh.* Now give, giveout, all together—*myeh!"* And every now and again his umbrella would wave, a grisly black baton, bringing them to one great *myeh.*

While the Algerians were in the midst of things several gabardine Jews stooped nearby, looked on as if it were all very strange, and a Jew in ordinary clothes came along, paused mournfully by the wall, sniffled a little, was so prosaic as to touch a handkerchief to his eyes, the Algerians never as much as looked at him, such a sissy was beneath contempt.

I asked the guide if the Algerians usually went on at this rate, he said no, just once in a while. And now he suggested the dancing dervishes. But no, we paid off and started up the streets of stairs.

It was toward evening now, the *muezzin* was again calling to prayer, a murmuring started up in the Hourva synagogue, vesper bells chimed, caftans, gabardines, cassocks came swarming through the streets, the believers in the caverns of the walls were hollering their wares, hammering the brass, crossing themselves, kissing the *mezzuzeh,* demanding *baksheesh,* never such a swarming and hollering as at this hour of the evening prayer, never such a business in the cavern-shops, never such a *kerplunk, kerplunk* of the lambs' heads, never such a murmuring, haggling, buying, selling, butchering, yammering, as the city, with one vast fetid breath, roared its terrible antiquity.

UP FROM antiquity come conflicting claims. To the devout Jews, Christians and Mohammedans this is the Holy Land. On the basis of history and sentiment they all have good claims. But the Arabs have lived here for hundreds of years, the Zionists have colonized for a few generations, the English have been here since the War. As the English have come last their case is easiest to handle.

The English want to collect taxes, maintain a favorable balance in trade, keep open the road to Persia, India and Anglo-Persian oil—"And," said an Englishman, "we would like the Jews and the Arabs to live in quietude."

"Why don't they?" said I.

"Heaven only knows," said he, "why don't you ask them?"

And so I put it to a Jew. He said that for centuries the Jews had been coming here to die. But Zionism gave them the idea of coming here to live. They bought small parcels of land, tilled the soil, and there was very little trouble. "But as the years went on," he said, "the colonies began to be successful, business men and speculators came in, real estate boomed—the Arabs are jealous," said he.

Well maybe, but it sounded inconclusive. I asked an Arab about it—"It isn't that we

A JEMENITE JEW *Saul Raskin*

are jealous of the Jews," he said. "To understand our troubles you have to know our history." And he told me about the centuries of Turkish oppression, how the Turks had sold the privilege of tax collecting to the highest bidder, the highest bidder had sold to other bidders, finally minor publicans set out with bands of troops and took everything they could lay hands on. "The land was wrung dry," he said. "That was our condition when the Jews came. And the *fellahin* were glad to get a little cash for their fields. Only—"

"Only what?" said I.

"Only," said he, "when the *fellahin* had sold their lands—what were they to do?"

"I don't know," I said, "what?"

"Better not to talk about it," said he.

But I wanted to talk about it, couldn't find another Arab with whom I could get started, looked up a Jewish business man, "Listen," he said, "every inch of that land was bought and paid for. And if it's worth more now, it's because of what we put into it."

I said what. "We irrigated," he said, "put in plumbing and electric lights, built schools, hospitals, universities, why ever since we've been here the Arabs've had more schooling, more hospital care"—the Arab question irritated him, he waved it away, "they got nothing to complain about," he said, and he told me what a filthy, unsanitary people the Arabs had been, how they had cultivated the soil in the most primitive way, "why we brought progress here," he said, "and prosperity" . . . but as I walked away I stumbled over Arabs sleeping on the streets.

One of them sat up, folded his arms across his dirty white robe, stared . . . I said I was sorry, my eyes weren't used to the dark —"It's all right, sair," said he. I asked if he would come and have coffee . . . after he was wound about with the tubing of the *nargile,* he began to speak.

Yes, he said, it was true. He had lived in filth and ignorance, eaten dates and wiped sticky hands on his hair, once, on a long trek, he had drunk Camel water. . . "But my land, sair," he said, "all has been worse since I sold my land."

I asked why he had sold it—"I owed money to the Emir, sair. He was going to take, so I sold to the Jew."

"And then?"

"Then I came to the town. Everything costs in the town, the money soon gone . . . have to get job."

I asked what he did—"Carry things, hammer brass, anything can do." But in recent months he had been without work, jobs were hard to find, the Arab industries were overcrowded, the Jews wouldn't employ him.

I asked why—"Because I am Arab, sair."

I went to a Jewish manufacturer and asked why he wouldn't employ Arabs—"Because they won't employ Jews," said he. I asked what this sort of thing would lead to, he said he didn't know, the Arabs were less and less inclined to sell their lands—"Serious problem," said he, and he spoke of the persecutions in Germany, the need of the Jews for more and more land, if they could get it Palestine could accommodate more refugees, the bars on immigration could be taken down—

"Nevair!" said an Arab, "the English have promised, sair."

"Yes," said a Jew, "but they have also promised this would be the Jewish homeland."

To which an Arab replied—"English make too many promises. Curse of Allah on the English, sair. Only one thing to do—take the land away from the Jew."

"Let 'em try it," said a Jew and he told me the Jewish landowners were armed, there was a Jewish fascist movement here, the Jew fascists wanted to do unto the Arabs as the German fascists had done unto them—

And in disgust, I turned away. It was plain, every time I looked around, that this was an Arab land. And so it was likely to remain, unless through mutual aid and goodwill it became an Arab-Jewish state. A man named Lazaroff had spoken for such an idea . . . and they killed him.

"Who killed him?" said I.

The Jew who was telling me about it looked around to see if he might be overheard—"The Jews," said he. "And no one was ever tried for the murder."

But this is a land in which an idea, nurtured in martyr blood, takes root. It is beginning to occur to Arab and Jewish workers that their lot is much the same, they have tired of hunger, disease and dirt under the auspices of Allah and Jehovah, they are beginning to work together for a new way of life, sometimes they go to harangue the Arabs and Jews passing by the Wailing Wall and the Mosque of Omar . . . I didn't see it, but the report is that such a gathering was dispersed today, Arab and Jewish policemen running after the Arab-Jewish Communists

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and cracking their skulls along the way to Golgotha, *which is, being interpreted, the place of a skull.*

BUT there are some people who are above the battle. Such a man was our innkeeper, Mr. Fast. "We have our own life here," he said. "We have nothing to do with all that"—and he pointed down at the Well of the Stairs. "We live like Europeans, we have European houses, European gardens, European clubs"—but business is business, and he asked if we wouldn't like a trip to the Dead Sea.

As we drove out four big sporty cars shot by us, Arabs in flowing robes leaning back on the upholstery—"The Emir," said our chauffeur. "Emir of what?" said I—"Emir of Trans-Jordan," said he. I asked if the Emir often went to Jerusalem—"For the Moslem conferences," said he. I asked what the conferences were about—"The Italians. We do not like what they do in Africa," said he. "Perhaps make Holy War."

And now we were at the Jordan, which inspired one of the most beautiful lines in the Bible, the one about we sat by the waters of the Jordan and wept when we thought of our native land.

And now, on our way . . . and not far from Jordan, an Arab processional, clowns and merrymakers in the vanguard, one of the Arabs pulling a camel along, a girl up on the camel, white veil over her face, yellow bodice and pink gauzy pants, quite like a vaudeville Fatima. I asked why she was the only one up on a camel—"She is bride," said our driver, "this is wedding procession, sair. Air leading bride to groom's house"—relatives, friends and well-wishers trooping along behind, holding lanterns on long sticks, pale lanterns that glowed faintly in the azure dusk, hired jokesters and merrymakers telling stories and chanting as they ploshed through the sand, the girl on the camel bobbing back and forth, back and forth, as if already on the troubled way of matrimony. . . .

And over the hills into the oncoming night . . . and the Dead Sea. Not very large, you can see across it, and not much to see. A bathing pavilion and restaurant on one side, salt mills on the other. I gave the driver some money and told him to get his dinner—"Does not matter, sair, about me." He was the same man who had taken us from Haifa to Jerusalem and still puzzled by a friendly word. His deep brown eyes looked into mine—"You are strange, sair," said he, "but I am glad to eat."

We went down to the water, Eden changed and ploshed about, every now and again she would tell me how wonderful it was and wouldn't I come in. But not that night, I was what she called "in a mood," I didn't care how dead the sea was, across those heavy dark waters were the lights of the salt mills, owned by Jews who wouldn't employ Arabs. . . .

And from a little away, toward the curve of the sea, I heard voices, an Arab voice and a Jew voice. I turned, there was a strange sight—a Jew and an Arab talking things over. The Jew was well dressed and the Arab was well dressed—"Listen Ibrim," said the Jew, "you make shoes and I make shoes . . . we got to get together." And he told about the Jew-Arab workers getting together—"No more the old foolishness, Ibrim," said the Jew. "With us it's got to be employer for employer, what we need is an Employers' Association"—

And Ibrim said yes.

And Eden came out of the water, we had dinner and drove away . . . a fine narrow road, mile after mile without seeing another car, a habitation, a human . . . the moon somewhere beyond the dark sharp ridges of the hills, a strange whiteness over the desert, by far the most entrancing desert I had ever seen, an electric desert, the feeling that at any moment hordes might rise from the sand, ghostly whiteness upon the yellow sand, deep shadowy pockets down the sharp hills and the sense of wings, unseen wings over all—

Bang—and the rear tire was out. We stopped, I got out to see if I could be of any use, our driver's eyes were hopelessly puzzled—"Please sair," he said, "you are bettair in the cair" . . . but I thanked him and set the jack . . . now Eden climbed out, gazed at the pale empty sands with their strangely peopled shadows and with the quiet ecstatic joy of the insane, went prancing out into the desert.

Of course Eden and I are supposed to be equals and anything either of us wants to do is supposed to be okay. But English officers are told to keep off the Palestine desert at night—and suddenly I was after her, struggling up a wave of sand—and there, a little below, in her white silk dress, stood she—and a Bedouin coming toward us, his long striped gown flapping, his low striped tent beyond, a small glow of embers before it—

We were all set for a scene from *Desert Love.* I was now at Eden's side, the Bedouin coming toward us, his feet ploshing up the sand, down the sand, up the sand, down the sand—

"Sholom," said he, this being the Hebrew-Arabic for peace—

"Sholom aleikim," said I, with a heavy Arab accent, this being the response for peace be with you—

"Allah huakbar," said he, meaning God is most great—

"Allah glug-glug Allah Allah," said I, meaning you said it, kid—and he put his hands up to the sides of his face, salaaming to me—and I put my hands up to the sides of my face, salaaming to him . . . and so we backed up over the sand, the Bedouin halting now . . .and we made the road.

Eden got into the car, and I, with an unsteady hand, helped the driver fix the new wheel, he didn't know much about it, I did most of it and when we were ready to take off—"Thank you, sair," he said, "it is good we are going, some places very bad nights."

Back in Jerusalem again and to the King David, a very large hotel with the quality of important emptiness, very black Sudanese in very white robes standing about between listless palms. The palms are potted and there is something potted about the Sudanese . . . who look on with dull unjoyous eyes as the colonials dance. The colonials are the people Mr. Fast was telling us about, European houses, European gardens, European associates . . . English, Danish, French, German, Spanish, Swedes . . . dancing hoppishly to American jazz, holding themselves very stiffly in dress suits of long ago . . . and the Sudanese staring in vacant stupefaction, wondering no doubt, how long O Lord, how long before they can go to bed.

JERUSALEM—THE MOSLEM QUARTER *Saul Raskin*

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MORNING and the stink, smell, blood, dank and shouting of the Well of the Stairs and with shuddering and cursing, we decide to go. And off with the driver of the previous night to Lydda Junction. A very small place, hardly more than a junction, our driver unstrapping our trunk and bidding us goodby. I go to the wicket, it seems we are to buy tickets for El Kantara, from there we can get tickets to Cairo or Port Said. And now for a porter. There was one standing about at our belongings, a barefoot Arab with a torn robe, legs exposed to the thighs, he told me how much it would be to get us aboard, I said all right and with that he proceeded to get the trunk up on his back—I told him to get a helper, but no, he said he would do it himself. And so he did, not only shouldering the trunk, but dragging the four bags, surely he was carrying something like 450 or 500 pounds—but he made it, bedraggled, bent over, his forearms but a few inches from the ground. . . I gave him more than he had asked—"But was very heavy sair," said he, and I gave him the rest of my Palestine coins—"And now *baksheesh,* sair," said he—there was something so humiliating about it, here he was, a magnificent physical specimen of this human race from which I came and no fool either, his deep, burning, appraising eyes told you that, he too was humiliated, but—"must ask you, sair," he said, "nevair know when I get other chance. A *baksheesh,* sair, if you can." . . .

And into a wooden car, more or less like the old time L car, except the effect of compartments, the aisle to the side, the very large windows open. Eden and I took one side of the compartment, across from us was a man in a dark blue suit, worried face, small black mustache and deep brown sorrowing eyes in bluish whites. He was very mannerly, rather painfully smiling . . . after a bit we got to talking and he told me he was an Egyptian. I asked him what an Egyptian was—an Arab, he said, who came from the Nile cultivators and had been influenced by European civilization. As for himself, he said his people had been Nile cultivators for over 400 years, he had been educated in London, he was an engineer.

We introduced ourselves. His name was Hamed Yeri, he was coming down from Damascus. I asked about Damascus, he said he had been there on a pilgrimage. I asked if he was a devout Mohammedan—"When I don't think about," said he. And if he thought about it—well, he said, belief wasn't compatible with thought. Then how did he come to believe—"Habit," said he, "there is little else to do, just work and believe." But the more you worked, he said and the more you believed, the worse things were. For instance, said I.

"Egypt," said he. The people were very poor—yet King Fuad received £1,000,000 a year. "A million pounds," I said, "why that's 5,000,000 dollars."

"Exactly," said he.

JERUSALEM—THE WAILING WALL IN MIDDLE DISTANCE *Saul Raskin*

"For what?" said I.

"For being the dummy of the English," said he. And he complained about Egypt being under English dominion—"But you have your own government," said I. "In name only," said he. And he told me that English advisors, administrators and police agents kept Egypt as it was. I asked if there were Egyptians who wanted things otherwise—"Any number of them," said he. Even in the government service, he said, he was in the government service, but bitterly against Fuad, "So is every one in Egypt," said he.

Then how could the king keep his power—"Through the English," said he. And now he told me of the Wafd Party. I asked what Wafd meant—"The People's Party," said he. And what did they want—"Egypt for the Egyptians, no more Fuad and a republic," said he.

And now he asked where we had been. He was particularly interested in Russia, asked how it was going, I told him. He said it was strange, but he never heard anything about Russia. I asked where he lived, he said his office was in Cairo. And were there English papers—"Several," he said, "and I read them every day, but there is practically nothing about Russia." But, he said, there was little of any interest in the papers, they were published under a censorship, you only read what a fine fellow Fuad was, what fine fellows the English were, what fine horses were winning the races, what fine courtesans had come back to town.

But on Russia—the feature that particularly troubled him was its vast public education. "Even in Egypt," he said, "with the little education we have, there are too many educated people." I asked what he meant by "too many" educated people—he said there weren't enough jobs for them. That, I said, merely meant that there weren't enough jobs at which educated people could be employed at a profit to the employer, old Russia had encountered the same difficulty. Well, he said, how was it possible that a revolution could make such an enormous difference? I said an ordinary revolution of one set of office holders against another wouldn't make any such difference, but a revolution against private profit would.

"How?" said he.

Well, suppose we took writing as an instance. Russian writers before the Revolution had experienced a particularly bad time. Now, with the huge increase in literacy, people read many more books, there were editions in the millions where once there had been editions in the thousands, there were far more writers, the writers did much better than ever before—the only people who had lost by it were the few middlemen who had published for private profit and in the long run they hadn't lost, they were publishers now and their audiences were so wide that they could publish what they liked without fear of competition and bankruptcy, they were publishers at salaries rather than at chance profits.

Well, said Hamed Yeri, he could see how it would work.

And so we talked of this and that, the train now curving over the sand toward the sea. And then a station called Rafa. Here Hamed Yeri reached into his bag, took out a red *tarboosh* which is a sort of stiff fez, set it above his face which was the color of dried lemon, his brown worried eyes welled sorrowfully out of their bluish whites, he smiled painfully, as if self-conscious about the rite of *tarboosh*—"For we have crossed into Egypt," said he.

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Work or Starve!

BRUCE MINTON

"GO TO it, boys," said General Johnson, leaning back in the swivel chair and mopping his flushed cheeks with a handkerchief. He glared at the reporters with little, bloodshot eyes. But it was clear that the General was not in one of his "cracking down" moods. He joked briefly and laughed. At his side sat Frances Robinson—the "Robbie" of the Washington days—and Mrs. Anna Rosenberg.

He leaned back, cleaning his glasses, answering the routine questions of the press in a routine way. Yes, he was putting 5,000 men to work each day. He pointed over his shoulder to the window, toward the vast lines of men somewhere in the streets of New York City. "Nobody knows what's in that pool outside. There'll be plenty of sifting—"

Thousands of men were so many cattle to the General. He would have them segregated at a later date—some for immediate slaughter, some to be rejected as not up to standard, some to be shipped here, there, wherever needed. Mass production, to hell with individuals. As Johnson intimated to a delegation of unemployed teachers, "I'm an old bird. I can't bother with what the workers think about me."

But like many of Johnson's statements, this was not literally true. He does bother. It's rather a spectacle to see the blustering administrator back down when he's face to face with mass resentment. Right now, as he gets the W.P.A. under way, he is more or less inclined to be diplomatic. Particularly as outside the window, ten stories below, he can see pickets moving up and down on the sidewalk. He probably knows their placards by heart:

GENERAL JOHNSON
We Want the Union Wage
Not the "Security?" Wage
Bricklayers' Union, A. F. of L.

or

ON STRIKE!
W. P. A. Pay Is Non-Union Wages
C. W. A. Paid Union Wages
We Protest Against W. P. A. Ruling
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

The W. P. A. took effect August 1. Johnson announced that he would put 75,000 men to work during the first month. By the end of the third week he had placed 6,000 men. The General was badly behind schedule. He raised a howl—in self-protection—claiming that men preferred the Home Relief "dole" to work. He'd show them. He'd "crack down." And with great publicity he announced that henceforth the rule would be "work or starve": if they refused to leave Home Relief when ordered to do so they'd be cut off relief rolls once and for all and could fend for themselves as best they could.

Mayor LaGuardia who rather fancies himself as an iron-willed administrator, added his own bit. He changed the slogan to "work or jail." Unemployed men with families who refused to accept the $19-$94 scale could expect no mercy; failure to support their families would make them liable to the courts. They could expect no leniency, if Mayor LaGuardia had anything to say; he'd see to it that they were put behind the bars.

The righteous General and Mayor—with the thorough approval of President Roosevelt—were guilty of misstating the issue. Actually, though Johnson claimed to have created 46,000 jobs, declaring that he could place 20,000 men immediately, when 13,000 were referred to him for placement over a period of two days, he could handle only a few thousand. The General's blast was challenged: it surprised very few when it was discovered that he had been bluffing.

Of course, Johnson had troubles enough. When he barged into New York from Washington as director of the W.P.A., he kicked the old clique that had ruled relief out of their offices and installed his own group, "Robbie" and Mrs. Rosenberg. The three ousted big-shots had to find desk space with the rest of the employes; Johnson's incoming clique regarded the displaced faction—Dickson, Langsdorf and Goslin—as professional social-service workers interested in keeping themselves in office and therefore obstructors of the federal government's relief program about to be initiated. The two factions fought for control; the fight persists, simmering—

But that is really the least of the General's worries. He had been sent to New York as the spearhead in Roosevelt's drive to lower living standards through work relief. New York was the proving ground. If he established the $19 to $94 wage scale, the administration's latest and most serious drive against the standard of living throughout the country would get off to a good start; if not—in that event, the Roosevelt unemployment program would lie shattered and the defeat would not only be costly but in all likelihood immediately disastrous to the New Deal.

The threat to organized labor of the W.P.A. scale was obvious from the first. Under the W.P.A., for example, an unemployed electrician would receive $93.50 a month for 120 hours work—or 77 cents an hour. The union scale was $1.50 an hour; thus the basic union wage was cut by approximately 50 percent.

Union men refused to stand by and see the wage structure that represented over a generation of labor struggles, shattered overnight. They resolved to strike. General Johnson hit the ceiling, issued another "forthright, devastating" blast to the press and attempted, through intimidation, to scare the unions out of definite action. His threats did not break the strike, called by the Building Trades for the second week in August. Rather, the deliberate failure of the top officialdom in the A. F. of L. to organize and press the strike resulted in a pretty dismal, if temporary, failure. Men walked out on this or that project, but the move lacked coordination or support. Johnson breathed easier—but not for long. What seemed a passing cloud promises to become a storm which in the near future should prove to be both fierce and persistent.

Not all men returned to work. Some unions maintained their picket lines. The A. F. of L. strike committee of nine on which conservatives predominate, has been forced by the growing resentment in the ranks of works on projects and in unions to take steps toward more definite action. White-collar groups have been admitted to representation on the strike committee—both the Federation of Architects, Chemists, Engineers and Technicians and the City Projects Committee (an association of over twenty white-collar organizations). As yet the Unemployment Councils, the militant union of unemployed workers of all categories, remains unrepresented.

A strike is of course seldom palatable to the A. F. of L. bureaucracy. Joseph P. Ryan of the Central Trades and Labor Council and George Meany, president of the State Federation of Labor, do not like to "oppose the government"; besides, they are supporters of Johnson. They know very well that a strike of W.P.A. workers would help build strong rank-and-file movements in the unions involved. Despite a resolution against the W.P.A. wage-scale adopted by the New York State Convention of the A. F. of L., the executives continue to mouth words and spike the militancy of the rank and file. Worse than that, they have given Johnson his most comforting support by declaring that so long as the union scale is maintained on an *hourly* basis, it does not matter how little the men earn by the *month*. In other words, so long as electricians—again to take this union as an example—receive $1.50 an hour (the union scale) it is of no concern to the A. F. of L. if individuals are given work that permits them to earn only $40 or $50 a month.

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Last week when General Johnson announced that he was about to put the "work or starve" edict into effect, he managed to terrorize numbers of workers who had seen the first strike collapse and who had been bewildered by the barrage of propaganda. Men thronged to the three registration depots of the W.P.A. The lines grew. From early morning to late afternoon, throughout the night, into the second day, twenty thousand men, three abreast, jammed the sidewalk, waiting to crowd into the depots where they would receive a slip assigning them to a project. General Johnson—organizer, administrator—made no attempt to relieve the severe suffering imposed upon these thousands; he was unconcerned that those who obviously could be handled one day were not told to go home and return the next day when they would receive a preferential place in line. Instead, the crowd waited, without food, without having eaten for days because while they were supposedly basking in the luxury of relief they actually were without money to buy so much as a cup of coffee or a sandwich. The thick heat suddenly changed to a cold drizzle; thousands waited in the rain, coat collars turned up, hands in their pockets—the skilled and the unskilled, the technician and the manual laborer. An architect found himself assigned to a ditch-digging project; an engineer was sent off to wield a pick in a sewer; a chemist applied his technical training to loading garbage on trucks.

And while the lines blocked the streets, those workers previously placed on W.P.A. projects went without pay. The efficient General had neglected to pay these men for over three weeks, some for over five. Protests had forced him to provide certain categories with a stop-gap payment of $13—which the General characteristically termed a "gift." All over the city, starving men too weak to work threw down their tools. The Salvation Army arrived with a handout—a sandwich, a banana, a cup of coffee—to meet the bare needs of hungry men in the government employ. Johnson hedged, brought out the "dead cats." And as resentment grew, he was forced to see to it that the men—or most of them—were paid.

The thousands in line applying for jobs at pay that destroyed the last bulwark of the "American standard of living" each had a story of suffering. The stories varied in detail: the underlying pattern was the same. I select two:

American, born in 1905 in Newark, N. J. A skilled worker, core-driller—a man who tests rock for its ability to support the foundations of a proposed building. Unemployed during the past year. Savings quickly gone. His wife and he—they were childless which made the case exceptional—formerly counted on earnings of $8.50 a day; it was impossible to get work, not only in his craft but of any kind. He applied for home relief and received $5.05 weekly, plus $13 a month rent. He lived five flights up in an East Side tenement in a furnished room—unheated except for a stove he had bought. Last Monday he had been summoned to W.P.A. He stood in line all Monday afternoon at 13th Street and Fourth Avenue. Finally, he relinquished his card and received a slip of paper. On Tuesday, he went to the Home Relief Office where he signed innumerable papers. On Wednesday, he stood in line on 18th Street and Second Avenue from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. On Thursday, he stood in line from six in the morning, remained there most of the day, finally was cleared through. He hurried to 23rd Street where he again stood in line, was at last placed as a laborer at $55 a month. He is glad to work. But he vows not to work as a core-driller at this rate. He is a union man and he has obligations to his brother workers. Before he'll allow the government to depress his wages in his craft, he'll strike.

American, born in Pennsylvania in 1891. Graduate of the University of Pennsylvania with an M. A. degree. Worked as a biochemist for sixteen years—two years in the army in 1917—earning an average wage of $65 a week. He is married with three children. In 1931 he lost his job, was out of work two years. All savings gone, he applied to the C.W.A., was classified as a technician, worked for $27 a week. Summoned to W.P.A. he arrived in line at 18th Street and Second Avenue on Tuesday, remained there all day, all night (so as not to lose his place) was finally cleared at noon on Wednesday. He was unable to eat during this time because he had no money, though he did get water from the fire hydrant. He was placed as a common laborer at $55 a month but he hopes to get himself reclassified as a technician—in which case he expects $85 a month, though he might be lucky to land in the top category of $93.50 a month plus ten percent.

More and more, the white-collar workers are taking the initiative in the fight against the W.P.A. It was the Federation of Architects, Chemists, Engineers and Technicians that reopened the strike against the $19-$94 scale after A.F. of L. walkout failed. On August 21, in cooperation with the City Projects Committee and other groups, the Federation called a three-hour stoppage. Johnson telegraphed: "Any worker who ceases work to demonstrate or protest during working hours will be dismissed." Under pressure from the masses of workers, Johnson retracted, changing his tune to that of calling the action ill-advised and letting it go at that.

That is, with but one exception. Eighty-five teachers affiliated to the City Projects Committee were summarily dismissed by Superintendent of Schools Campbell. They received no hearing, no warning. Johnson had gone so far as to call them "damn fools" to strike but had assured them that no action would be taken—with the possible exception of loss of a day's pay. Campbell, a city official, proceeded to dismiss government employes. And General Johnson, usually so jealous of authority, did not see fit to interfere. The teachers demanded reinstatement. Pressure on Johnson increased. He transferred them to other projects with vague promises for consideration in the future; in the meantime, through Campbell's action, they face loss of licenses and even blacklist in their profession.

Everyone admits that W.P.A. is a mess: confusion, recrimination, inefficiency, arbitrary and meaningless orders, discrimination. The future? General Johnson has the answer: terrorize the workers, force the $19-$94 scale down their throats, utilize the A.F. of L. bureaucrats to forward the scheme, play one end against the other. In case things get hot, he can always back down on a minor point, make an unimportant concession to the top leaders of the A.F. of L. that will save their faces without altering the general scheme of the W.P.A. forced-labor program. Such concessions would facilitate the A.F. of L. in calling off all decisive action. Finally, the white-collar groups must be kept separated from the workers—whether by setting up special categories and trying to convince workers in one category that their problem differs from the problem in any other group or—and Johnson has already made a few tentative remarks in this direction—raise the Red scare.

The case of Willis Morgan is interesting as an indication of the General's approach. Morgan is president of the C.P.C. Not long ago Johnson proclaimed that the white-collar workers were being hoodwinked by the Reds who dominated their unions. The statement achieved nothing. Johnson tried a new tack. When Morgan arrived in the W.P.A office at the head of a delegation, Johnson looked him over and simultaneously had an idea. He talked of "cooperation." And turning to Morgan, he invited him to take a place, along with Ryan and Meany, in the Labor Relations Division of the P.W.A. Morgan stated that he was not a New Dealer, in fact he actively opposed the entire program. That made no difference, Johnson insisted. Morgan would be valuable on the board because he represented the white-collar viewpoint. Besides, there was a salary. "Of course," the General hastened to add, "this is no attempt to gag you. Don't get the idea I want to keep your mouth shut——"

Morgan consulted his organization. They agreed that his presence in the Labor Relations might have value. Morgan accepted the invitation. It was a clever move on Johnson's part—or so he thought. But Morgan didn't fit. As Johnson put it, "Well, that experiment was simply a good experiment." For Morgan refused to betray his organization. Within a week, Johnson had ordered Morgan to restrain his group from staging work stoppages. Morgan refused. He followed with his resignation, stating to the press:

The administration tried to use me as a buffer between itself and the justified indignation of the workers. This I refused to do. I'm firmly opposed to the Roosevelt $19 to $94 coolie wage and all its workings. . . . It also appears that administration-inspired rumors have been circulated to the effect that I have sold out in return for an administrative job. The purpose and effect of all this is to undermine our organization and discredit me. . . .

Johnson's ruse had failed. The split did not come off.

The General's view of the future is not

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that of the workers in New York City. Their organizations formulate demands: the Unemployment Councils have come forward with the platform of union wages on all relief projects; skilled workers to receive a minimum of $93.50 a month at hourly union rates; unskilled workers to get $5 a day, four days a week. Unionization of all projects under a Project Workers' Union to be affiliated with the A.F. of L. to enforce these demands. Similarly, the Federation of Technicians contend that highly trained professionals receive a $36-a-week minimum for fifty-two weeks a year. Militant unions throughout the city call for union wages on jobs, a minimum of 120-hours' employment each month.

Sentiment grows in favor of a city-wide strike, not only of W.P.A. workers but supported by P.W.A. and industrial employes. Such a strike would spread throughout the state, throughout the nation. Its results would be of primary importance to workers in all categories, in private industry or on relief. Victory would definitely establish the union-wage scale as a basic wage. It would speed up unionizaion; give the movement toward rank-and-file control great impetus—a danger that undoubtedly terrifies the A.F. of L. top officialdom and fortifies their resolve to avoid real strike action at any cost; it would deter the federal government from cutting off all home relief as it now plans to do not later than November 1. And because it would resist the Roosevelt administration's attack on the standard of living, it would be a powerful blow against the ever-increasing menace of fascism.

The strike threat affects the General. As I write, the report comes in that he has announced a raise of ten percent in all wages of unskilled workers. The meaning of this is clear enough—keep the unskilled from cooperating with the skilled in case of trouble. A good idea—one of those concessions intended to save the real program of the W.P.A. But it is doubtful if it will work. Instead, a mass meeting protesting forced labor has been announced by the strike committee.

General Johnson sits in his office threatening, "Work or starve," "Work or go to jail." The General was formerly a cavalry officer; he is accustomed to command. Behind him stands the Roosevelt administration and the power of Big Business; the time has come, so the decision intimates, to destroy the union wage and all for which the wage stands. But though the General conceives of the workers in New York City as his to order about, he will find that they do not take orders so readily as the soldiers did in the army. The General has a pretty big war on his hands.

Shorty and Oscar

NEV CAMPBELL

"HOW fer yuh goin'?" he said as I climbed onto the seat beside him.

He was driving an open-faced sedan. He called it a Dodge, but I think that was a misnomer — he steered his Dodge through every flock of buffalo gnats along the trail during that long ride through Montana. The windshield was gone and I was kept busy spitting bugs from my mouth, sniffing them out of my nose and digging them out of my ears until the cold air of evening descended upon us and benumbed their wings—then the pests rested until morning.

I didn't answer the man's question until I was settled. "To New York City!" I said, hoping to make him gasp in astonishment.

But he wasn't even startled. He chewed his cud of tobacco a few moments in silence, then spat out about a quart of its juice over the hood. The spray came back and gave us a shower bath.

"Got any money?" he asked, after he had wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

That made *me* gasp. "No, I haven't. I'm broke. What makes you ask?"

"Feller goin' a long ways like that oughtta have some jack on him if he wants to git by. How yuh 'spect to git to New York without any money? Yuh ain't a bum—are yuh?"

"No, I'm not a bum. I'm not asking you for anything to eat. All I want is a ride. I expect to pick up a little work when I get into the wheatfields of Dakota. I'm pretty husky."

He gave me a sidelong glance of appraisal. "I'm goin' 'sfar's Jimtown'. Cost a lot o' jack fer gas an' oil to keep one of these old buzz wagons goin'. Thought maybe yuh wanted to ride along with me."

"I do!" I exclaimed. "That's why I thumbed you. But I'm not asking you for anything to eat."

He slowed down his machine. I thought he was stopping to put me off. It made me sick to think of the twenty-five miles I had walked the day before—up and down hills through the wide-and-open spaces of Montana. Many cars had passed me, but they were nearly all loaded down with vacationists headed for Yellowstone Park or some other playground. They took no heed to a weary wayfarer's thumb pleadings.

"Want me to hit the grit?" I asked, when he had stopped.

"Nope, I jes' wantta talk to yuh a bit, so's we know where we're at."

We sat quietly a few minutes. At least he was quiet. I was kept busy slapping buffalo gnats. He didn't seem to mind them. He seemed to have gone into a trance gazing south at Madison peak with its snow-capped dome looming above the rest of the mountains. The air was hot, but it wasn't that sticky, humid heat of the low altitudes of the Atlantic states and I didn't mind it so much.

The mesa all around us was rolling, until it reached the foothills to the north and south where the mountains began. Then there were sudden rises in broken altitude until the snow caps and glaciers were reached and a single peak loomed up like a sentinel. The way we were headed—the plains met the horizon in a blue arc. No human habitation came into view. My eyes followed a golden line zig-zagging across the gray of sagebrush and green of chaparral. Every now and then a black object would come crawling into view — growing larger as it drew nearer—eventually taking the form of an automobile. Then it would whizz by and grow dim in the distance behind us until it looked like a spider running along a web. The road was well named—"The Yellow Trail."

The man I was with interrupted my thoughts. "Will yuh work fer me, fer a day, when we git to the wheatfields, if I let yuh ride with me an' give yuh yer board an' keep till we git there?"

So that was what had occupied his thoughts. And all the while I had been thinking he was a poet and communing with the silence and its denizens.

"Sure I will!" I replied instantly, tickled at the chance to get through Montana, where nearly all the automobiles were loaded down with camping outfits—and not an inch of space for a hitch-hiker.

"Yuh won't lay down on me, will yuh?" he asked a bit distrustfully, as he shifted gears and pulled out onto the road.

"I'm not in the habit of laying down on anybody," I answered, reassuringly. "Once I give my word to do something—I do it!"

He seemed satisfied, but said nothing. In fact he lapsed into silence from the time he had shifted his gears and got under way, until we went into camp that night.

Buffalo gnats, while riding, were as nothing compared to the same pests while gliding over the earth by human locomotion. I had blisters on my feet that resembled pneumatic cushions — and they got larger with every step.

I tried to draw the man into conversation, but it was useless. He merely answered in low monosyllables and grunts. I asked him three different times within an hour, "What's your name?"

He didn't answer me until the third time

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and then snapped, "What the hell yuh wantta know that fer?"

"Well, a man usually likes to know the man's name he's going to work for—doesn't he?"

He chewed his cud of tobacco and pondered the question a minute. "My name's Jim," he said at last, "but they call me Shorty for short."

"What shall I call you—Jim or Shorty?"

"What the hell do I keer what the hell yuh call me!" he snapped. "Let me alone!"

"He's a pleasant so-and-so!" I thought.

Shorty was about five feet tall, swarthy of skin and with a week's growth of scanty whiskers. He looked rather weazened, though I doubt if he was over forty years of age. He wore old, blue overalls and blouse—badly patched—and an old felt hat that had seen hard usage. There wasn't an ounce of superfluous flesh on him—hard, unremitting toil had seen to that. His movements were slow and methodical—he made no extra moves for anything.

He stopped a few minutes at Bozeman for air and water, and at Livingston he filled his tank with gas, then went to a grocery and meat-market and bought some provisions. He put them in a box he had fastened on the rear of his car, then got in beside me and drove on without saying a word. At dusk we stopped at Big Timber for the night in an auto-camp.

Shorty had a gasoline stove in the box fastened to the back of his auto, which he got out and started priming. When the fire was going good he got a bucket from somewhere in his car and told me to get it filled with water. When I returned he had an old battered coffee pot into which he had poured some loose coffee. He said, "Here, take this over to the camp-stove an' boil it full of coffee." Then he handed me a large skillet, put two generous pieces of steak into it. "Jes' give the meat one turn," he said, "but boil the coffee fer five minutes." Then he began to slice boiled, cold potatoes into another pan he had on the gasoline-stove.

When I returned with the meat and coffee the electric lights in the auto-camp were just lighting. We had a table all to ourselves at the edge of the camp. A small incandescent lamp threw a dim glow down on us. Shorty put half of the meat on my tin plate, beside a lot of fried potatoes, and the rest he dumped on another tin plate for himself. Then he took four eggs, which were frying on the stove in another pan, and upset two of them on top of my meat and potatoes. "Now pitch in an' eat," he said.

We sat on benches opposite each other and ate in silence after he had placed a small can full of cold water on the stove to heat.

The tourists in the party were calling to one another and two or three phonographs filled the night air with discord, but nobody paid any attention to us. When we had finished eating, Shorty said, "Now, clean them dishes with sand, then wash 'em in that can o' hot water on the stove—I'm gonna make the bed, an' then we'll hit the hay."

The bed was ready before I had finished washing the dishes. The back of the front seat was fixed so that it could be let down to form a bedspring. There was an iron contrivance to keep it on even keel with the back seat. Blankets and quilts were thrown on top of it for bedding.

"We might as well crawl in an' git rested up," Shorty said. "They'll be turnin' these lights out soon."

WE WERE up at daybreak. Shorty put a store-box of provisions before me. "You cook breakfast," he said. "Fry some o' that bacon an' eggs, cook some oatmeal an' coffee, an' take the rest o' that bread we had left over last night. That'll be enough. I'm gonna pack up an' be ready to hit the trail soon's we eat."

While I was cooking the breakfast I noticed a small wooden box, covered with wire-netting, setting apart from the other stuff. I walked over and peeked into it. A horned toad was flattened out on the bottom.

"That's Oscar," Shorty called to me by way of enlightenment. "Don't monkey with 'im."

During the night I had made up my mind to ditch Shorty in the morning. I had noticed many more automobiles on the trail after we had left Livingston, Montana, and had figured it wouldn't be hard to catch a ride from here on. I wouldn't have ridden with Shorty in the first place, if I hadn't worn blisters on my feet the day before. An old, broken-down machine like the one he was driving was a disgrace even for a hitch-hiker to ride in. Shorty wasn't even good company to ride with. He seldom spoke to me and when he did it was only to tell me to do something for him. "After breakfast I'll tell Shorty to go to hell, that's what I'll do," I said to myself. "Then I'll hit the grit."

But while cooking breakfast I met Oscar, and Oscar aroused my curiosity and changed my plans. "I'll endure him a while yet," I thought. "I'll find out why the hell he's carrying a horned toad around with him."

"Where did you get Oscar?" I asked, hoping to cheer Shorty by becoming interested in his pet. "He's a lot of company for you, isn't he?"

Shorty actually smiled when he answered me. "I got Oscar down in California," he said. "Got into a whole nest of horned toads an' caught Oscar for a pet. He's so tame now he won't leave me for nothin'. He used to scoot over the ground like hell at first, but now I kin keep him on my coat all day if I wantta."

"You and Oscar have been doing a lot of traveling—haven't you?"

"Oscar goes with me everywhere I goes. Over in Idaho, last summer, I was drivin' a tractor fer a farmer, an' he didn't wantta let me keep Oscar in my room with me. He was payin' me five bucks a day too. When he sees he'd hafta git a new man to do his plowin' fer him, he let me keep Oscar in my room with me."

"What do you feed Oscar?"

"Flies."

"Flies?" I asked in surprise. "How do you catch enough flies to keep a horned toad alive?"

"I'll show yuh. But you gotta wait till the sun gits up good an' warm."

Shorty became loquacious. He opened up with a flood of information about himself and his soulmate. "I been all over this country in this old buzz-wagon," he said. "All the way from Mexico to Canada, an' St. Louis to California."

There were many repetitions in his narrative, but the sum of it all was that he had worked at seasonal jobs—planting, harvesting, road grading, anything in the way of hard work that presented itself and paid well enough to go after.

At first, he had followed the railroads, riding freights to wherever there was a possibility of getting seasonal or casual work. Then, when the automobile came on the scene, he bought an old Dodge for a few dollars and learned to drive and repair it. From then on he was the master of his fate—he had graduated from a common laborer to a skilled ranch-hand able to repair or drive any make of tractor.

About an hour or so after I had asked Shorty what he fed Oscar, the sun was high above the horizon. He stopped the machine on the side of the road and we both got out. He went to the back of the car and took a small baking-powder can from the provision box. He opened it and dumped a chunk of putrid meat onto the ground beside a clump of sagebrush. In two minutes it was covered with flies. Then he took Oscar from his box and put the toad beside the meat. Oscar squatted low on his belly and began working his tongue in and out like a streak of greased lightning. Every time Oscar pulled back his tongue there was a fly on the end of it. In five minutes there was no more room for flies in Oscar's belly. He was bloated and turned away in seeming disgust.

"That's the way I feed Oscar," said Shorty, as he grabbed his pet and placed it on his coat lapel. It stayed there, seldom moving the rest of the day.

"Doesn't Oscar eat anything but flies?"

"Oh, yes, but flies is what he likes best. Sometimes, when I come across a big nest of ants I set Oscar on top an' he cleans 'em up slick as a whistle."

"How often do you feed him?"

"'Bout every couple o' days er so. Sometimes he won't eat fer five, six days mebbe. I ain't fed him fer three days now."

We got back into the machine and late that afternoon drove over the Montana line and into Sentinel Butte, North Dakota. Shorty had been in a cheerful mood all that day telling me his life's history and I was

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glad I had met up with Oscar. Oscar had been the means of tapping the well springs of good fellowship in Shorty.

When he had selected a place to park his car in the Tourist Camp, Shorty said, "I think mebbe I kin pick up a job in this town if I kin find a farmer I know. You git supper ready an' I'll see if I kin find him." Before he left me, he gave me fifty cents to buy provisions.

When he returned an hour later I had the supper ready. "Well, I seen him," he said. "We got fifty acres of wheat to shock tomorrow, jest west o' town."

We were up at dawn the next morning and after breakfast Shorty drove to the edge of town and parked his car beside a big wheat field.

"Now git busy," he said, without any ceremony. "Pick up these bundles an' stand 'em up in shocks like this, five er six bundles in a bunch an' then put some on top like this, so's the heads hang over the top an' lets the rain drain off—savvy?"

His demonstration was easy of application and we went to shocking wheat. Shorty kept his eyes peeled on me for a short time to see if I did the work right. Satisfied, he said, "Now if we git this field shocked today, an' you're a good worker, I'll hire yuh to work fer me reg'lar for three bucks a day—savvy?"

"All right, Shorty," I replied, "but we'll talk about that tomorrow morning."

At noon we made our camp at the side of the road and cooked dinner from provisions that Shorty had bought in Sentinel Butte. We both were wet with sweat, tired, and neither of us spoke while we ate our lunch and rested before we went back to work.

Along about four o'clock I thought I heard a locust singing on a nearby fence post. I hadn't heard an eastern locust sing since I had taken Horace Greely's advice and gone "West" several years before. The song of the locust roused memories of when I was a boy at the "ole swimmin' hole." I stopped working and listened. The locust stopped singing. I scanned the fence posts but couldn't locate it. When I started working again the locust began another song. Again I stopped and listened. The song ceased. I could not locate the locust. When I had repeated the operation several times—working, stopping and listening — Shorty yelled to me from away across the field where he was then shocking wheat, "What's amaterr with yuh—yuh goin' nuts?"

"No!" I yelled back. "I thought I heard a locust singing, but I can't locate him!"

"Never mind 'bout locusts, we gotta git this field shocked before sundown!"

"All right, Shorty!" I yelled back, and started to pick up another sheaf of wheat. I straightened up like lightning and jumped back. Beside the sheaf lay a rattlesnake, coiled, its rattles standing straight in the air buzzing—a sound like that of an eastern locust singing.

A shock like that of electricity went through me as I jumped back. The snake uncoiled and started crawling toward the sheaf of wheat lying near it. I sprang toward the snake and crushed its head in the soft earth with my heel. I kept stamping on its head until it was smashed to a jelly. Then I took out my pocket knife and cut the rattles from its tail.

Shorty started running toward me, yelling, "What's matter with yuh?"

I counted the rattles. "Ten rattles and a button, Shorty," I said, as he drew near. "I just killed a rattlesnake." I held up my trophy for inspection.

"What the hell did yuh kill it fer?" he yelled. "It wasn't doin' nothin' to yuh—was it?"

"No, it wasn't doing anything to me, Shorty, but there's no telling what it might have done if I hadn't seen it in time to scotch it."

"Rattlesnakes gotta right to live too! Ain't they?" he snarled back at me. "What right yuh got killin' a snake? What right yuh got killin' anything."

He grew purple with rage. "Now, yuh git th' hell out of this!" he almost screamed. "I don't want nobody workin' fer me what kills rattlesnakes er anything else. Everything's got a right to live—rattlesnakes an' all. They won't bite yuh if yuh don't do nothin' to 'em. Now yuh kin jest git the hell out o' this—yuh're fired!"

"All right, Shorty, you're the boss," I said, I went over to his car, got my coat and roll of blankets, threw them over my shoulder and started walking toward the highway.

"Can you beat it?" I asked myself, aloud. "He wouldn't even kill a rattlesnake."

When I looked back across the field, Shorty was stooping over the spot where I had thrown the dead snake. It looked to me as if he was examining the dead body of the snake. I was too far away to note the expression on his face, but I imagined it was one of grief.

A Letter from Germany

BERLIN.

I HAVE been reliably—and in this case "reliably" can be taken with unusual seriousness — informed that the present unpublished short-term debt, almost entirely accumulated since 1932, approximates 18 billion Rm., that the rate of such indebtedness now increases at approximately 1¼ billion per month and that the total at the end of 1936 can most certainly not be less than 38 to 40 billion Rm. Of this, about 60 percent is Arbeitsbeschaffung (labor creation, literally), and about this percent of Arbeitsbeschaffung is certainly of a military character. A similar percent constitutes the best-informed estimate of the degree to which the existing activity in the heavy industry is so oriented. In other words, it is mountain or pyramid building, but the cross and bones is its symbol and leeching skulls its proper fruit.

Herein lies much of the apparent paradox of the present situation—declining unemployment, mounting capacity ratios, decreasing relief, rising costs, steady lowering of standards of living. Arbeitsdienst is compulsory for a six months period for both men and women (the female compulsion is temporarily relaxed) which takes off the labor market about 500,000 on the average of one-half year each year. But with the exception of this item, in the main the figures are not as far off as they would appear. Therein lies not a favorable situation, but one filled with the most explosive forces we know in the modern world. For while part-time employment falls off, while full-time unemployment declines, the total wage aggregate goes up only very slowly. The transfer from relief to wages is not noted, which may mean that the aggregates do not go up at all.

Meanwhile, rates stay about as they were before. Actually this means that a somewhat larger, though possibly the same, wage total is now being divided by a larger denominator. But the numerator is trickier than that. Being in marks, it is not checked for cost of living. The index would reveal an advance of about 20 percent over the time of the beginning of the new regime. But the index is weighted about 50 percent with foods and foods about 50 percent with starches and other heavy human fodder. Furthermore, it is manipulated. Checks on individual items would indicate that the real advance might conceivably be twice as high as the percentage given above. For example, a big processor told me that hogs at wholesale, cost his slaughter house 35 percent more than one year ago, cattle 50 percent. Fresh vegetables—peas, beans, lettuce, carrots, etc. —have about doubled in price; fruits have more than doubled, possibly tripled. Eggs are approximately twice as expensive as one year ago; potatoes between one half more and twice the rate one year ago. (I checked these personally and I know them to be correct—at *retail!)*

On the other hand, it is next to impossible to estimate the reductions in money income due to compulsory and "voluntary" levies of one sort or another. The American

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Commercial Attache gave me the estimate of 40 percent for his own staff. He said he knew the figure would be denied by even his own German staff, but that he believed it to be, nevertheless, true. Several of the others who have gone into the matter with some care, however, say it is too high, but that it certainly is as much as 20 percent, and may be as high as 30 percent on the average!

The product: the factories open their doors, production expands, employment increases and the workers of all classes and types are ground down to what was believed the level of subsistence, and then further. And as they are driven down the internal tensions increase. There runs a fundamental and steadily widening cleavage throughout the whole social-economic structure, and the fact that all opposition is suppressed only serves to dam up the flood waters. Even within the Nazi Party the tensions are increasing.

To date the Right—Schacht and financial-industrial capitalism—has won every major scrimmage. Even Arbeitsfront has been internally emasculated of all possible worker control. The national and regional organizations are, weird as it may seem, actually under the control of the national and regional chambers of commerce and industry. This is a statement that can be documented without effort. Nothing but Kraft durch Freude has been left, that bastard organization, and this latter is beginning to offer plenty of trouble.

But the Right is not satisfied. Schacht has carried through a series of measures which are regarded by the entire Right with repugnance and dissatisfaction. But they are believed necessary, and hence are allowed to pass. Amongst these is a provision which calls for the practical confiscation of all profits over six, and in some cases, eight percent. These are supplemented by other levies, administered through the elaborate organization of the Reichsgruppe Industrie—and equally distasteful—which are to make up a total (for this fiscal year) somewhat in excess of 900,000,000 marks. This amount is then to be paid out to exporters to the equivalent of the difference between the internal and the external prices. In one case I know the actual figure—that of the Opel car—where the amount equals 400 marks per unit sold abroad. In form the confiscated totals are represented by interest bearing claims against the Gold Discount Bank, but in actuality they are "gifts" and non-recoverable. In addition, factory unrest is taking a number of curious turns, and it is an open secret that such concerns as, for example, Siemens and Halske, are worried about a staff which can no longer "buy its stein of beer" in the evening. There are intangible forces here of enormous importance.

The rift in the party is between Schacht who has lots of brains, who is universally hated by all, but who is absolutely indispensable, and the "left" rabble-raising crowd—consisting of the Strasser-Roehm inheritance, Goebbels, and this time Goering, Streicher, Seldte and others. Schacht at a recent cabinet meeting argued dourly that he had done all he could, the limits were about reached, and unless the leftist tendencies were squelched his program would be ruined. Then dramatically, " . . . and if you decide to do this, then the thing for you to do is to take me out and shoot me now." Hitler made protestations of adherence to principles laid down, but the others hung together—for the first time. So the new changes in the police department of Berlin, the squelching of the Stahlhelm in Bavaria, East Prussia and other places, the recent outburst of Jewish attacks, the enormous increase in sales and in insolence of that most disgusting of all sheets, Der Stuermer. The "left" group is demanding as the necessary condition to staying in power confiscation of all the great estates and of all share capital. Otherwise, how can the rank and file be kept in line?

The S.A. has consequently begun to increase its power once more. The criticism once more is becoming open—you hear it everywhere—on the streets, in the restaurants, in any miscellaneous gathering of persons. As a high-up S.S. man recently told me, the discontent, uncertainty, fear and grumbling affects every layer of the population, every association, cadre, grouping—whether these be Communist, Socialist, Catholic, Protestant, S.A., S.S. or any other group. A headless monster is in command of the country; the agent provocateur may be under anybody's window; hunger, fear, uncertainty, are the dark angels on the blast of the storm that everybody fears is one day to burst.

Nor are these mere imaginings. I have talked with a considerable cross-section of the insiders; X—— with many more than I—and we are agreed that beyond question the situation is much more acute than it has probably been since the Nazi coming to power, and that another and far more sinister "purge" or purge-surrogate is in the offing. None of this shows on the surface. Except for small parts of Paris in its, and Moscow and Leningrad in their world-famous revolutions, the surface stayed unruffled to the uncritical eye—the Barrows or the Donald Watsons. And beneath the surface things are happening which forebode futures one dreads to think about.

All such guesses mean little, of course—but while I think it possible that the present crowd of cut-throats might last five or even ten years, they may be blown out within a fortnight, six months or a year. In a situation as tense as that existing there now, anything may happen. Y——

Correspondence

New Deal Uniforms

To The New Masses:

The thin line that separates the less obvious forms of Roosevelt's fascist moves from the more open forms of Hitler and Mussolini is gradually breaking down. Apart from slight racial differences, they have always betrayed striking fundamental similarities. But now, as the Roosevelt brand grows older, it begins more and more to take on even the superficial likenesses to its European brothers. The latest step is uniforms

Mussolini has his black shirts; Hitler, not satisfied with one color, has both black and brown; and now Mr. Wallace puts his Forestry Service into bright new, green uniforms. This is probably the fulfillment of a long cherished aesthetic desire of Messrs. Wallace and Tugwell. And we may soon see uniforms—all colors, all sizes—on all the supervisors, minor bureaucrats and officials throughout the work program, particularly in rural areas. Perhaps it is an aesthetic fancy; at the same time it accomplishes all those militaristic purposes of molding mob consciousness which have served Hitler and Mussolini so well. H. W. Williams.

"Southern Mother"

To The New Masses:

"Southern Mother" by Emmett Gowen, in your August 27 issue, was one of the most sensitively written pieces that I have read in the New Masses. And because it was sensitively written, it was *understanding.*

With sympathy and understanding, Gowen has described the eternal conflict between the radical son and his mother—mother with her ideology rooted in the old order. It is a conflict that not in every case comes to a showdown. In many cases the son tenderly leaves her direct questions unanswered or, with a sense of futility of ever convincing her that he knows a new and better world, he mumbles something and turns his back to her. But Sam, in Emmett's story, unable to avoid his mother's keen questioning, finally makes a clear, memorable reply: "You taught me honesty, mother. You taught me to tell the truth and stand by it, and told me to love my fellow man. I am fulfilling the pattern you laid down in my brain and heart, and if this makes me a Red—well?"

The mother, "a lean woman worn out by toil and denial in the squalor of small ownership"—a little Tennessee farm—said wearily, "Well, maybe I'm just too ignorant to understand." This time she it was who turned and walked off.

Emmett Gowen's story is a little classic, a truthful description of the pitiable "poor, bleak household, decorated with the claptrap symbols of the dupery of the poor—cheap, foolish pictures, the motto: 'Jesus Saves'," etc., etc. The conflict with the mother who clings to a diminishing little, yet tells her radical son that "this is a good government," is tenderly, bravely reproduced. Bruce Crawford.

Defense of the Letter

To The New Masses:

With reference to the letter from New Mexico of your issue of September 3, 1935, I would like to add these remarks: The question of reportage is a moot one in this case and the discussion purely academic, it seems to me. Phrases such as sentimental distortion being only less damaging than hate-distortions of a Hearst and the lady's pink lorgnette are out of place here, and more careful thought with less flying off the handle to produce sensational and climaxing letter-enders would make for less animosity about practically nothing. The article was a letter written to a husband and as such had all the right to be what it was; a personal reflection (A Woman's Viewpoint—World-Telegram style, as it were), not intended to cover the two Five Year Plans including the productions

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of oil, steel and manganese, or even an article about Soviet marine conditions. As a matter of fact, it is possible that the tearful ending of the Soviet sailors donating their $60 gift to the International Red Aid served better than any kind of straight reporting to put over the point of the sailors' independence and total needlessness for servility on their part. This dramatic method makes American motion pictures such an excellent propaganda factor for the state. Anyway, the NEW MASSES accepted the letter as such; which puts the blame, if any, on their shoulders.

Stevenson may be interested to know as a part of his letter infers that there is a difference in Soviet sailors' singing and the singing of workers on other steamers. For that matter I didn't hear the workers of the Normandie singing while resting and they are in the best position for just that. Spending a day on a Soviet steamer is like traveling to Mars—so great is the contrast. What makes it all so remarkable is that there is no sign of sacred cow business on board ship. I have spent quite some time on Soviet steamers in America and always found it difficult to distinguish the captain from the rest. As for his assistants, there is no telling. Selfishness, greediness, for the sake of position just doesn't exist, but in its place there is a personal respect for each superior from a subordinate which never shows outwardly, but which is always felt. I never could find out who was the ship's doctor, greatly esteemed as he was. Either the doctor was bashful, modest or didn't care if anyone knew what he was. Stoker or first mate, however, there was always the boast of a knowledge of some English, and both could point with almost personal pride to the benefits of the Soviet system, by concrete facts, over mine.

Cleaning up the kitchen, performing unwanted chores, is settled in this manner: each day someone else is assigned to it. One day the crew was to go to Steeplechase (this is paid for by the Government, incidentally). Those who had to do their chores this particular day did not go, and as much as they wanted to, not a word was heard from them. Imagine, this was their only chance, probably in a lifetime to visit Steeplechase (all, almost all sailors from the Soviet ask about Luna Park or Steeplechase) yet there wasn't even the slightest grunt of dismay. When we returned that night, the workers who could not go greeted us, asked us about the trip, and immediately prepared to serve supper. Here there were two different dining rooms. The workers immediately repaired to one and invited us to eat. We declined, as I have a terrific distaste for their food, but the doctor, first-mate, wireless operator, who were eating in another room would not let us go until we had joined them. Does this mean that the officers had more to eat, could afford to spare some and also would not deign to eat with their inferiors?—which is laughable enough, but which could easily be interpreted in this manner by a Hearst reporter (the letter-writer is only less damaging according to Stevenson). Of course not! Immediately after we had eaten, word got around that we were in the other dining room, and they streamed in; tea was poured and lively talk began.

This should help to answer some of Stevenson's questions. There is something about a Soviet ship which is indescribable. It is the general feeling of the crew without one exception. There may be personal faults among them, such as one may be a lazy person, one may talk too much, but it is a certainty that this shortcoming will be taken care of in the best manner possible by his comrades. This is the word for it: Comradeship. One gets the impression, because of it, that although there may be a few shortcomings here and there, they will all be ironed out in the best way possible.

W. S.

On a Soviet Steamer

TO THE NEW MASSES:

I don't blame Philip Stevenson for being sore about that Soviet Steamer article. Gush is a source of alienation and discomfort to all who encounter it. I traveled on the *Sibier* from London to Leningrad last year and interviewed captain and crew. What I wanted was facts and I got them. I think your readers will find them more telling than the lady's throbbing:

The working-day is eight hours. Overtime pay is 40 percent above normal pay. Sovtorgflot, the steamship line, also pays an additional 12½ percent (of the aggregate wages paid) to the union for old-age insurance, sanatoria, etc. The main function of the ship's Soviet is to raise the cultural level of the crew, so as to enable them to advance to better jobs; I saw mathematics being taught on deck to the engine-room crew. In addition, the seaman's club at Leningrad features lecture-courses on engineering, marine problems and cultural subjects.

A seaman who gets sick is nursed at sea and given free hospital care on land; his pay continues as if he were working. Every worker gets an annual holiday of at least two weeks except those whose jobs put them under extra physical and mental strain; accordingly, four weeks vacations go to two types of seamen: the captain and the engine-room crew. No one under eighteen is permitted to work on a Soviet boat; on the *Lafayette* (French Line) I had seen twelve-year-olds. The working-clothes worn by the seamen are supplied free.

Two student-sailors were on the boat, studying marine work for the summer; each received 60 rubles per month for studying, plus passage and all that goes with it. Before sailing, every seaman gets a mandate, as it is called, which he gives to his family; his family cashes it in at the fleet office. Every member of a seaman's family gets free medical and hospital care on the same basis as he. The captain gets 650 rubles a month; but all members of the Communist Party are limited to 400-450 rubles per month. Every seaman gets a pension at the age of fifty. If he loses his capacity to work before then, he gets it at that time. If he still wants to work, he gets his pension plus his normal salary. The usual pension is between 50 and 75 percent of the last regular wage before retirement, depending upon the technical level of the work (skilled or unskilled); specialists get pension of 100 percent or more.

Instead of specimens of mild hysteria, I think you should print more compilations of fact. Moreover, I suggest that you translate more stories, satires, essays and so on from Soviet periodicals. The NEW MASSES affords us hardly any picture at all of what the Soviets are thinking about, while Living Age is continually translating articles, stories and reportage into English.

New York, N. Y. CHARLES HATCHARD.

Wages and Salaries

TO THE NEW MASSES:

Apropos your editorial on "Wages and Salaries" in the August 27th issue, I should like to add the following in corroboration of what you state there:

> . . . labor income includes salaries, compensation for injuries, and other items which have stayed relatively high. The labor income curve thus exaggerates the participation in national income of the overwhelming mass of wage earners, particularly those in mining and manufacturing. Finally, note carefully, that the dividends and interest series understates rather than overstates the income which property owners receive; it not only omits rents, but it perforce does not reflect that immeasurable yet perhaps substantial, income which owners of stocks and bonds may receive because they control—whether that income be in the form of compensation or of bonuses or of profits from deals on intimate knowledge of the market and of corporate financial status.

This statement is found in an article in The Quarterly Journal of Economics, August, 1935 issue, a Harvard University Press magazine. The statement is made in reference to the fallacious methods that bourgeois statisticians employ in the determination of figures on wages, salaries and profits, although the writer of the article does not characterize those who are paid to lie in figures the way I have done.

W. W. MARTIN.

Letters in Brief

R. M. of Zurich, Switzerland, writes to call our attention to a visit paid by the vice-president and program director of the National Broadcasting Company to Germany where he was entertained by the Propaganda Ministry. Plans were laid for close cooperation between the Merman official radio company and N. B. C.

F. Gelardi, who writes to say that he is being deported from Cork, Ireland, urges all Irish-Americans to send NEW MASSES subscriptions to friends and relatives in Ireland where he says the magazine is badly needed.

Ralph Dean of Brooklyn praises the NEW MASSES for the part it is playing in America. He says it is one of the most effective weapons against war and fascism.

Vincent Ferrero and Dominick Sallito are threatened with deportation to Italy because they sublet a part of their restaurant to publishers of an anarchist magazine. Calling attention to the fact that they face almost certain death if they are deported, Albert Strong, secretary of their defense committee, Room 24, 133 Second Avenue, is appealing for protest against their imprisonment.

Fantasy, a poetry quarterly published at 950 Peberton Avenue, Pittsburgh, will publish a Walt Whitman number this fall, Stanley Mayer, editor, writes. There will be an award for the best poem dealing with Whitman's personality.

Sidney Moore of Chicago writes to call attention to the fact that there is a difference in pictures that grace postage stamps. Soviet stamps, he points out, are designed to drive home such ideas as the horrors of war, the advances in industry, etc.

Mrs. Eva Robin of New York didn't like the article, "Doctor's Dilemma," that appeared recently in the NEW MASSES. She says that it was defeatist in tone and introduced a discordant note in the magazine.

J. M. of Youngstown, Ohio, writes that there is an increasing number of accidents in the Republic Steel Corporation factory there. He says hardened workers are made sick by the appalling number of men killed and injured every week and appeals for an investigation.

Cecil Prickett of Moxee, Washington, asks NEW MASSES to devote more of its pages to book reviews and other cultural subjects and less to political happenings.

R. O. Dogwood writes to chide NEW MASSES for slowness in making use of American revolutionary traditions and says that the charge of un-Americanism hurled at Communists keeps away many hundreds of backward workers.

The Provisional Committee Against Discriminatory Practices in the City Colleges informs us that it is calling a conference of all the organizations that have already pledged their support in the campaign to force the hiring of Negroes as instructors in city colleges. This conference will be held on Monday evening, September 9, at 8 o'clock, in the Harlem Y.M.C.A., Seventh Avenue and 135th Street.

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REVIEW AND COMMENT

Reader's Report

MORE than ninety novels were submitted to THE NEW MASSES' novel contest, just concluded with the selection of *Marching, Marching!* by Clara Weatherwax. About one-third of them were written by women. The manuscripts came from every section of the country. The mid-West led all others with twenty-eight contributions. Only four were received from New England. Ten were sent from the "deep" South, three or four from the Rocky Mountain region and about half a dozen from the Eastern states—with the exception of New York City, of course, which was responsible for about twenty. California, where writing seems to be a major industry, sent sixteen novels, one of them being good enough to win the prize.

Naturally, not all of the manuscripts conformed to the rather narrow limitations of the contest. One was a Zane Grey westerner. Another was an old-fashioned temperance novel, depicting the rise of a young lad out of the mire of poverty and the perils of the liquor traffic; it was submitted as a candidate for our "protarian" novel contest. Several were "exposes" of bankers and politicians in the muckraking manner. There were a few utopias à la *Looking Backward,* several Hollywood "romances" and a "melodramer" in which the hero was "swallowed up in the black night" at the end of every chapter. Perhaps the strangest one was a religious tract in which Christ was resurrected in order to drive fascism from our shores!

However, except for about a dozen of these scripts, all of the novels dealt with working-class life or were proletarian in outlook. More than half of them were explicitly Communist.

A large percentage of the manuscripts were of the following type: they were full of authentic material taken from the experiences of workers, farmers and the lower middle classes in the United States. Most of them must have been written by people who lived through the events they tried to describe: they did not have to go outside of their own background for the proletarian subject-matter of their books. But in spite of the genuine source material, most of these novels were unpublishable. They were afflicted with the same diseases that send ninety-eight out of every hundred manuscripts to the graveyard of American fiction.

One of these afflictions is Hollywood. The "realism" of the cinema has influenced proletarian writers as well as others. It has led them to twist realistic material into stock formulas of the screen or to fake events in the same way as most scenarios. Hollywood "touches" of every kind—remarkable "coincidences," hair-breadth escapes, etc.—were visible in a number of submitted manuscripts. Stories in the contest centering around a machine shop, a textile factory, a coal mine, displayed nearly every phoney characteristic of the American talkies.

A more important defect of these novels was the very opposite of the Hollywood menace. Many of them were packed with actual happenings which were not *re-created* as fiction, but were simply recorded as fact. They were nothing more than bare literal reports. They had no "story" value. Some of them contained splendid revolutionary material: one centered around a group of radicals on the West Coast during the Palmer raids; one dealt with the moral decay of an A. F. of L. organizer; others with farmers, marine workers, students, shopkeepers and salesmen in the crisis. But their authors seemed unable to do more than report events baldly. These writers lacked the artistic sensibility which would enable them to churn a mass of experience into literary form. I felt that those who had a story of social or historic importance to tell—such as reminiscences of the labor movement—might have turned out publishable books if they had written a piece of reporting, of personal history, not fiction.

When these authors tried to achieve a literary effect, the result was usually a farce. They turned out "literarious" drivel, with florid descriptive passages, stilted dialogue and cliches plastered all over the text. Their literary "manner" was hopelessly archaic; it was a fifth-rate corruption of Victorian and pre-Victorian sensibilities. For example, one manuscript rotated around a major industry of today, but it sounded like a burlesque of a century-old melodrama—from the first page which began with the "dawn streaking the sky" to the last sentence: "But this, gentle reader, we will not relate here." Occassionally, sentimental and melodramatic writing was a cover for faked, second-hand material unknown to the author.

These writers seemed blissfully ignorant of all developments in modern fiction from Henry James on. All of them could stand a stiff dose of modern fiction—Hemingway and Faulkner, Joyce and Proust, as well as proletarian novelists. Since there is still so much disdain for literary tradition in the American labor movement, it is worth repeating here that no worker (or anybody else for that matter) is likely to be a skilled writer if he does not serve his literary apprenticeship under the best and most advanced masters of his craft.

This ignorance of modern writing is partly responsible for what is, I think, the worst scourge of proletarian literature. I mean the tendency of writers to sloganize, to preach the principles of the class struggles directly to the reader, to impose "propaganda" *upon* the story instead of making it arise out of the story itself. Like most deliberately "tendentious" novels (proletarian or otherwise), such books are full of sermons which violate the integrity of the original situations upon which they are based. For example, in one of the manuscripts submitted, a marine worker gave a laborious explanation of the whole background of a strike, in a speech addressed to another seaman, who had been through the same experiences and knew them just as well as the first worker; obviously the lengthy monologue was put into the mouth of the character for the benefit of the reader, not for the plot of the story. In another script, which was the first novel I have seen dealing with a section committee of the Communist Party, bare editorial statements about the great leaders of the proletariat stood out from the narrative like billboards. This tendency to editorialize out of context reached its limits, I believe, in another novel (which in the main was a fair picture of office life) where the author, in all seriousness, told the reader (in the midst of describing a pep talk by the sales manager) that certain cosmetics manufactured by the company were known to thousands of women who never heard of Rosa Luxembourg and Clara Zetkin!

As a rule, this editorializing is put into the form of didactic conversations and interminable speeches. Now it is true that speeches and arguments are a genuine part of revolutionary experience; but it is also a fact that they are not the ordinary materials of recent literature. Hence a certain amount of literary ingenuity is needed in order to mold such substance into literary form. It is distressing to find most of these writers completely unconcerned with such matters. They seem content merely to record these things, plainly and baldly. Trained writers, with imaginative and critical powers, know how to work out devices for handling such material. As a prominent novelist recently pointed out to me, one of the most difficult problems where a speech is involved, is what to do with your other characters, who stop dead while the speech is going on. In a new story of his which I had just read he showed me some of the things that could be done in such a situation.

Sermonizing and sloganizing in proletarian fiction is a symptom of the vulgar "leftist" approach to literature, of which the "conversion ending" is another example. This type of formula-plot is found in the novel as well as in the short story. In one script

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which I read, the "conversion" suddenly took place in the second half of the last sentence in the book! Another curious pattern followed by some of the contestants was the tendency to wring titles out of words from "The Internationale." Some of the titles used were: *We Have Been Naught* (several times), *No More Tradition's Chains, The Earth Shall Rise* and *The Final Conflict.* In all cases, these phrases, which might possibly be appropriate for stories of life-and-death class battles, stories with a degree of tragic grandeur, were mis-applied to novels dealing with run-of-the-mill people and events.

It may be objected that the criticisms made in this report are too severe and "academic" for a contest, particularly a proletarian contest. Perhaps such an objection is justified. In all likelihood, a number of the contestants would never have tried their hand at fiction if they had not been impelled to do so by their new political conviction, as well as by the high place which the Communist scheme of things has given to literature. Some of these scripts possessed a certain documentary importance as confessions of political faith, however inadequate they were as literature.

Moreover, not a single revolutionary novelist of any standing, nor a single member of the new generation of proletarian story-tellers, was represented in the contest. As far as I know, with the exception of five or six writers who have printed a fugitive piece or two in the left-wing press, all of the contributors were unpublished authors.

This does not mean, however, that only one or two novels in the whole lot were worth publishing. The percentage of publishable manuscripts was a good deal better than the two percent which is, I believe, the customary number that achieve book form. There were almost a dozen novels which I thought were *worth* publishing (although they were not particularly distinguished), or which would be publishable if a few changes were made. It is impossible in this report to make more than a few comments on some of them.

Two novels that I remember were chiefly literal accounts, but they were so cleanly recorded and so full of social material, that study and re-writing would make them into good novels. One was the story of an electrical worker. It was jammed with authentic details of his life at home and on the job. As a chronicle of representative central experiences of a skilled American worker, it was a document packed with social significance. So was another narrative which traced three years of life in the U. S. army. An excellent piece of reporting, it never penetrated deeply enough into the thoughts and feelings of its characters.

In another category of publishable manuscripts belonged the biography of a needle trades organizer, from the 1880's to the World War. Unfortunately, the movement of its plot was too pedestrian. Another story, which traced the revolutionary development of the son of an upper-class family, showed rare restraint for such a theme. Another dealt with a worker's family during the World War. Its description of how the father, a radical, gave way to the pressure of war hysteria, was handled skillfully. The book fell down, however, in the last section, which leaped too suddenly from the War to the Bonus March. Still another was almost-a-thousand-page epic of a department store. While the mass of detail which it built up gave solidarity to the manuscript, the size didn't seem to fit the subject matter. The last section, though, presented an excellent picture of life in the New York Communist movement, and it was done without idealization or romanticizing.

Several novels in the contest had some of the best qualities of the smoothies: fresh up-to-date situations and quickly-moving plot. One dealt with most phases of the life of modern youth: sports, bumming around, love, looking for a job, etc. The second was a somewhat romanticized story of a poor Mid-western farmer, a rather tragic-heroic figure, who became a Communist, and of his son who followed him; yet the novel was full of psychological clashes of individuals in personal relationships rather than social—I mean the political question formed only the back-drop against which the personal experiences of the characters (their loves, hates, disappointments, good times, etc.) were cast. The subject-matter and treatment of these two books were similar to the type of stuff that the largest section of the American audience is accustomed to reading at the present time.

Other novels which deserved honorable mention were two experiments in novel technique. One consisted of a number of snap-shots, each one of a different person who had been "laid off" by a big department store. The scenes were held together by an interesting technical device—but they were related to each other *only* by this device. The other was a remarkably adept imitation of Dos Passos' mannerisms, not only his technical devices but his method of sliding quickly through people's lives, of bringing them together, etc. Except for a fantastic sort-of-syndicalist conclusion, relating to the seizure of a factory, it was an interesting piece of experimental writing, just a little too derivative.

There were a few other publishable scripts. The final choice, however, narrowed down to two novels. They represented two extremes in proletarian fiction. For a while, the decision of the judges was deadlocked. One of these novels was the product of a real worker-writer, a young trade-union organizer. It described his childhood in a textile city where his parents were also radical trade-union leaders, in pre-war days. Although it was full of effective writing and human characters, it seemed to lack an intimate feeling for the overtones of recent fiction; in places its style was a little dated. But it is a competent first novel and will be published.

The winning selection, *Marching, Marching,* by Clara Weatherwax, on the other hand, is a distinguished piece of re-creative writing. Stemming out of modern fiction, it adds a few modest devices of its own to the novel. It is indubitably the work of a new talent in American letters. Its author has a fresh, alive sensibility which re-creates and re-fashions sight and sound as well as speech and action. The locale of the story is a lumber town in the Northwest. It is a brief, swift story, centering around a strike struggle of the nineteen-thirties. It never stops or stumbles. Sometimes its writing is good enough to leave the reader a little breathless. Its sense perception is very fresh and keen. Not only does it capture the sound of the sawmill but also of the mimeograph. Even little details of observation, like the sudden flight of a bird,

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are put cleanly and vividly. Curiously enough, it was submitted to the contest under a masculine pseudonym, but it was easy to spot it as the work of a woman writer, for the book has a soft, feminine quality.

Of all the manuscripts submitted, it is, I think, an ideal selection. It is the kind of a novel that should please both extremes of our proletarian audience. The layman will find a short, swift story that holds his interest and is jammed with "militant" episodes; the literary critic will, I believe, find its writing to be first-rate.

The novel grew out of the author's early life and experience in Aberdeen, Washington, where her grandfather, a lumbermill owner, was one of the earliest settlers. The book, however, shows the direct political influence of the recent West Coast strikes which, as the author says, "crystallized" her "understanding of the labor movement and its social implications."

This novel contest was the first of its kind in the United States. It was worthwhile, I think, for it "discovered" at least two young writers of promise. Moreover, it was of greater importance than the usual "literary contest." As the author of *Marching, Marching!* expressed it in a letter to THE NEW MASSES: "Winning this award carries with it more than a personal joy: it bears a responsibility towards the working class which I appreciate and hope to be worthy of."

ALAN CALMER.

A Masterly Polemic

TROTSKYISM: COUNTER-REVOLUTION IN DISGUISE, by M. J. Olgin. Workers Library, Publishers. 160 pp. 15c.

I FELT a momentary incongruity when I picked up this pamphlet—book rather. A poet reviewing an important political polemic! But in the revolutionary movement poetry is not withdrawn from life; the poet, along with any live minded man, is interested—more, he is vitally concerned in that interplay of human forces that politics becomes when a revolutionary situation develops, making politics dynamic again, for everybody.

Besides there is an exceptional literary breath about the issue of Trotskyism and it is perhaps not altogether chance alone that the thoroughly political-minded author of this pamphlet is a man who made his first impact in literary criticism. Trotsky owes much of his surviving reputation to his accomplishments as a writer. A large number of his more influential followers are literary intellectuals; and one of the most recent of Trotskyist activities to receive attention was the attempt in Paris, by a French Trotskyist group, to disrupt one of the sessions of the International Writers' Congress for the Defense of Culture.

Besides the career of Trotsky has something of the perfect tragic plot about it, which Trotsky himself has not failed to dramatize (using considerable poet's license) in his memoirs and in his "history" of the Russian Revolution. In fact, Trotskyism owes some of its force purely to literary entities. Trotsky the writer has succeeded in mythicizing Trotsky the politician, presenting himself as prophet, martyr and super-revolutionist.

But behind the myth that dazzled some romantic minds a vicious reality was at work. Trotskyists of the sword rose behind Trotskyists of the pen. Assassination became their final form of political action. Kirov, one of the chief builders of the Socialist state, was destroyed. Trotskyism stood revealed incontrovertibly, in that murderous pistol flash, as counter-revolution.

It may be well here to recapitulate that in the Soviet Government's prompt and summary dealings with the terrorists no one was executed for political opinions alone; that Kamenev and Zinoviev were exiled within Soviet territories; that the trials were secret for diplomatic reasons, several foreign countries being awkwardly involved, a consul being recalled in one instance for his too notorious complicity.

Trotsky poses as a Leninist; the Trotskyists as a Leninist party. But, from the beginning of his political career, Trotsky was an opponent of Lenin, as from its beginnings as an organized opposition in the Russian Communist Party Trotskyism has been in consistent opposition to Leninism. The earliest relations between Lenin and Trotsky were those of political opponents. In 1903 Trotsky opposed Lenin denouncing him in the strongest terms. From then on until 1917, veering uncertainly right of the Bolsheviks and left of the Mensheviks, but most often taking a Menshevik position, he opposed the Bolshevik party.

After the October revolution when Trotsky, appreciated by the Bolsheviks for his activity and for his gifts as a writer and orator, was given a role in the party, he opposed Lenin in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. Later, in discussions over the formulation of trade union policy, he again opposed Lenin. This while Lenin was living. After Lenin's death his opposition to Lenin's policies and to the Bolshevik party increased. Especially in the major issues of the agricultural program and the concentration upon building Socialism in Russia he fought party policies. Throughout he waged a bitter, undisciplined and finally conspiratorial struggle against Leninism.

Attempts have been made to explain this opposition on psychological grounds, especially by literary commentators intrigued by the problem of a dominant personality, frustrated in its ambitions. But there is a simpler and clearer explanation that not only accounts for Trotsky's consistent opposition but explains the consistent opposition of less dominant personalities like Zinoviev and Kamenev, "revolutionists" who even tried to hold back the October uprising.

The explanation lies in the answer to the question "Whom do Trotsky and the Trotskyites represent?" Trotsky and the Trotskyites represent a class which still has surviving forms in Soviet Russia; and which is today nervously active throughout the capitalist world—the petty bourgeois. The characteristics of this class were identified long ago by Karl Marx who described it as "a transitional class in which the interests of two classes are simultaneously blunted." The success of the revolution represents their *future* interests; but class peace represents their *immediate* interests. They waver therefore between the revolution and the yearning for class peace. Not being wholehearted in any allegiance they remain morbidly fearful and critical of the two classes between which they find themselves. Marx says further:

> Culturally and by individual status they may be the polar opposites of members of the shopkeeping class. What has made them become the political representatives of the petty bourgeoisie is this. Intellectually they have failed to transcend the limitations which are, materially, imposed upon the petty bourgeois by the conditions of petty-bourgeois existence. Consequently they are, in the theoretical field, impelled towards the same aspirations and solutions as those towards which, in practical life, the petty bourgeois are impelled by material interests and by their social position. Speaking generally, such is always the relationship between the political and literary representatives of a class and the class they represent. (*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, English Edition, pp. 58-59.)

Lenin, in 1908, foresaw the danger the revolution would face from its petty bourgeois allies. His words, written then, were a brilliant forecast of Trotskyism:

> In every capitalist country there always stand, side by side with the proletariat, broad strata of the petty bourgeoisie, small owners. . . . It is perfectly natural that the petty-bourgeois world conception should break through, over and over again, in the ranks of the broad workers' parties. It is perfectly natural that it should be so, and it always will be so even up to the vicissitudes of the proletarian revolution for it would be a deep error to think that a "full" proletarianization of the majority of the population is necessary for the realization of such a revolution. What we are now experiencing often only in the realm of ideas: arguments against the theoretical amendments to Marx,—what now breaks through in practice only as regards separate particular questions of the labor movement, like the tactical disagreements with the revisionists and the split with them on this basis,—the entire working class will yet have to experience in incomparably greater proportions when the proletarian revolution will sharpen all controversial questions, concentrate all disagreements on points having the most direct bearing upon defining the conduct of the masses, force, in the heat of struggle, to separate the enemies from the friends, to throw out the bad allies in order to deal the enemy decisive blows. (*Collected Works*, Vol. XII, Russian Edition, p. 189.)

The role of these "bad allies" and the necessity of being disembarrassed of them is clearly explained by Stalin:

> All these petty-bourgeois groups somehow or other penetrate into the Party into which they introduce an element of hesitancy and oppor-

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tunism, of disintegration and lack of self-confidence. Factionalism and splits, disorganization and the undermining of the Party from within are principally due to them. Fighting imperialism with such "allies" in one's rear is as bad as being caught between two fires, coming both from the front and rear. Therefore, no quarter should be given in fighting such elements, and their relentless expulsion from the Party is a condition precedent for the successful struggle against imperialism. (*Foundations of Leninism,* English edition, p. 121.)

Trotsky's opposition began as noted before, in 1903, when he clashed with Lenin over the structure and function of the Social Democratic Party. Lenin advocated the disciplined and united revolutionary instrument that Communist Parties all over the world have become. Trotsky advocated the Menshevik, Social-democratic ideal, a "revolutionary" party patterned on bourgeois parties and inevitably functioning as an instrument *for reformism rather than for revolution.* This, again was what he fought for within the Russian Communist Party, but this time with an added motive—to maneuver himself, as the head of a sanctioned opposition, into a position where he could fight for power. For three years, and in spite of continuous, overwhelming defeats, he fought for power for the petty bourgeois, in the name of "inner party democracy." He was expelled, not because the Bolshevik Party is undemocratic —close students of its organization describe it as the most effectively democratic political instrument yet devised—but because when the votes went against him, he attempted to effect his will through conspiracy.

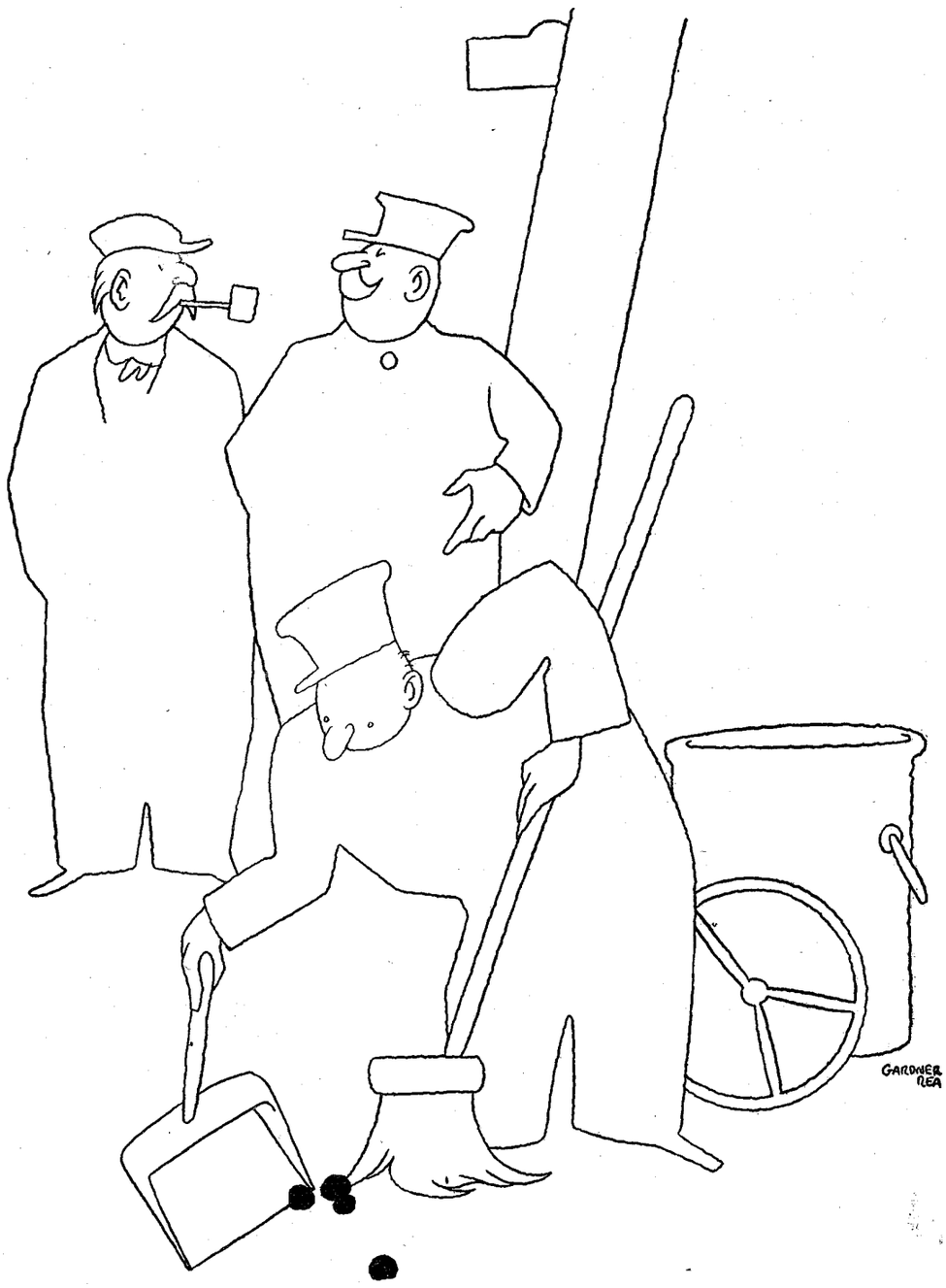
It is impossible within the space of a review to present adequately the specific issues on which the Trotskyist battle has been fought. They are brilliantly analysed and given in their historic role in Olgin's comprehensive pamphlet.

They stem from Trotsky's refusal to admit the possibility of a victorious proletarian revolution in one country, unaided by simultaneous revolutions in other countries and, leading from this, his refusal to admit the possibility of building Socialism in one country even after a successful proletarian revolution, without the aid of simultaneous revolutions elsewhere. To that may be related his attitude to the party, a search for safety in numbers, rather than in quality of membership. To that also may be referred his attitude toward trade unions. So weak was his faith even in the revolutionary workers that he proposed, in direct opposition to Lenin, to take from them power and responsibility, to turn them into mere bureaus of the government. Thus the very foundations of Soviet democracy, which proceeds from the workers' will expressed in the factory up through the executive organs of the government, would have been laid on a false base.

More dangerous still was his lack of faith in the peasantry whom he would have dealt with virtually as enemies. In 1922 Trotsky wrote:

> It was during the interval between January 9 and the general strike of October, 1905, that the views on the character of the revolutionary development of Russia, which came to be known as the theory of the "permanent revolution," gradually crystallized in the author's mind. This somewhat complicated term represented a rather simple idea. . . . The revolution would not be able to solve its immediate bourgeois problems except by placing the proletariat in power. And the latter, upon assuming power, would not be able to limit itself to the bourgeois framework of the revolution. On the contrary, precisely in order to secure its victory, the proletarian vanguard would be forced in the very early stages of its rule to make deep inroads not only into feudal property but into capitalist property as well. In this the proletariat will come into hostile collision, not only with the bourgeois groupings which supported the proletariat during the first stages of revolutionary struggle, but *also with the broad masses of peasants* who were instrumental in bringing it into power. The contradictions in the situation of the workers' government in a backward country with an overwhelming majority of peasants can be solved only on an international scale, on the arena of the world proletarian revolution. (L. Trotsky, *1905,* Preface.) (Italics mine. I. S.)

Acting on this interpretation Trotsky advocated a policy of suspicious wardship over the peasantry that would inevitably have turned them into enemies of the revolution. Long ago Marx and Engels, and after them Lenin, had had an opposite view of the peasant role. They saw the peasantry not as enemies but as natural allies, which in fact they became and as reservoirs of revolutionary energy. The peasantry has in fact, become one of the mainstays of the revolution and socialist construction. Viewing the peasantry in this light and directing his policies by it Stalin has made possible the collectivization of the farms and the full partner-



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ship of the peasantry, with the proletariat, in the building and operation of the Socialist State.

The genesis of this view of Trotsky's is, as has already been pointed out, in his petty bourgeois lack of faith in the forces of the revolution. His pessimistic view of the peasantry is part of his pessimistic view of the Revolution. His much talked of theory of permanent revolution reduces itself to this: that in the uneven development of capitalism victorious proletarian revolution in one country, particularly in an undeveloped country like Russia, is impossible without the help of the victorious proletariat of other countries. The building of Socialism in the U. S. S. R. which is acting as an example and a spur to the world revolution is branded as a betrayal of the world revolution. According to Trotsky and his followers what has happened before their eyes has not happened; peasant collectivization has not been allowed; socialist construction which is rapidly building a Socialist State has not effected any of its objectives. The achievement is damned in a new indictment—that of Soviet "nationalism."

Olgin has masterfully summarized the Trotskyist theses in the terse analytic quoted below in which he shows how, inevitably from his wrong premise his counter-revolutionary conclusions grew:

> 1. The basis is: The impossibility of socialism in one country;
> 2. Hence—the assertion that what is going on in the Soviet Union is not socialism;
> 3. Hence—the conclusion that what *is* being built in Russia is "national socialism";
> 4. Hence—the conclusion that the "national-socialist" government of the Soviet Union is "Thermidorian," *i. e.,* counter-revolutionary, and stands in the way of the world revolution;
> 5. Hence—the assertion that the Communist International, which is dominated by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which is the party of "national socialism," is blocking the way of the world revolution;
> 6. Hence—the conclusion that the crying need of the world proletariat is to build a "fourth international" to be led by the "great strategist" of the revolution, Leon Trotsky.
> 7. It follows from the above that support of intervention and the killing of Soviet leaders are revolutionary acts.
>
> As you see, there is logic in these ravings. They all follow with iron-clad necessity from the fountainhead of the Trotskyite denial of socialism in a single country. That they do not happen to tally with historic facts is not the Trotskyites' fault.

It is not surprising therefore that Trotsky and Trotskyists have spoken of the developing Chinese Revolution as a mirage. They have gone so far indeed, as to call the Chinese Red Armies "bandits" and to so interpret the political situation in China as to minimize the territorial extension and the growing influence of the Chinese Soviets.

The evolution of a faction like that of Trotskyism from dissidence to counter-revolution, is inevitable. Their familiarity with the inner policies and strategy of the revolutionary movement gives them special weapons. In their hostility to the Revolution they at length use these weapons directly on the side of the counter-revolution. It is possible, thus, for Trotsky to write articles in the capitalist press, even in a notoriously reactionary organ like Liberty Magazine. It is possible for him to give fatherly advice to Japanese imperialists on the revolutionary dangers they face at home. Wherever one sees the face of Trotskyism where is it turned? Not against capitalist enemies but against the revolutionary movement. Upon whom is its hatred and mockery spent? Not upon the capitalist demagogues, but upon the devoted Marxists and Leninists advancing the revolution in every country in the world.

Olgin reveals this in a pamphlet of exceptional clarity and power. It has the same quality of readability which made his previous pamphlet *Why Communism* one of the most useful and popular works published in recent years. Passage after passage rises to memorable eloquence. It takes its place among the masterpieces of recent polemic literature.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

Not All of Briffault

EUROPA, by Robert Briffault. Charles Scribner's Sons. $2.75.

ALTHOUGH there is an "I" in this story, he serves no apparent purpose, and it seems clear that Julian Bern, the central character, is nearer to Mr. Briffault than is the inconspicuous and unimportant narrator. It is through Bern's eyes that the reader sees Europe from the beginning of the century to the outbreak of the war. Brought up in Italy, given a year at a British public school, trained in biology at Cambridge, Bern breaks away from the traditions of the English ruling class. Shedding one illusion after another, he comes to realize that European civilization is ready for collapse, and he sees vaguely that the hope of the future lies with the working class. But, though he is inspired by the sincerity and clarity of such working-class leaders as Jean Jaures, Tom Mann and Karl Liebknecht, and though he identifies himself momentarily with a group of striking coal miners in England, he cannot cross the class barrier. In August, 1914, he stands ready to join the German radicals in their anticipated struggle against war, but the socialist vote for war credits disillusions him and he takes flight with his mistress.

The story of Bern's education is told against a background of cosmopolitan upper-class life, the amusements, vices and intrigues of aristocrats of twenty nations. In beautifully-documented detail Briffault shows us the bankruptcy of the ruling class. The steady procession through the pages of *Europa* of people with titles naturally suggests *The Remembrance of Things Past.* It is a good deal to ask of any novel that it bear comparison with Proust's masterpiece, but the contrast is illuminating. Briffault is a Marxist and understands the causes of European decay far better than Proust ever did, but he is vastly less successful in making the reader aware of that decay as an actual process. It is true that Proust is working on a larger scale and has single scenes—for example the Verdurins' party in *The Captive* —that are almost half as long as *Europa,* but the difference is not merely one of length. One of Proust's briefest scenes makes us more conscious of the manifestations of social rottenness than the whole of Briffault's novel.

It is symptomatic that there is not a single character in *Europa,* not even Julian Bern, who makes a sharp impression as a human being. The Italian, Russian, French, German and British nobles seem curiously alike. Probably, as a matter of fact, they were; but it is Proust's peculiar virtue that he exhibits the bankruptcy of his aristocrats not only in the more superficial qualities that they have in common, but also in the elusive traits that distinguish one from another. Briffault lacks this sense of character, and he lacks as well, though there are brilliant bits of description, Proust's startling awareness of places. He has not, in short, the sensibilities of a poet.

Yet *Europa* is a book with virtues of its own, virtues that must be called, with no sense of disparagement, journalistic. I vastly prefer Mr. Briffault's informed, intelligent journalism to the wretched soul-searching and the secondhand sensibilities of most of the "poetic" novelists. The sense of journalism is, of course, enhanced by the introduction of historical personages, from Nietzsche to Mussolini, D. H. Lawrence and Henry James. But it is not merely these informal glimpses of the great that make one feel that this is a piece of immensely clever reporting; the whole spectacle of international aristocratic society is set down with the quick assurance of a man who knows news values. Good journalism is by no means to be despised in the novel, and the journalism in *Europa* is so good that it raises it far above most of the novels of the year. I can think of only one recent novel that is comparable to *Europa* on its own grounds, and that is Leo Lania's *Land of Promise,* which is just as skillfully journalistic but reveals a much less informed and active intellect.

I wonder, however, in spite of my admiration for *Europa,* if the novel is the form that best employs Briffault's talents. In *Redder Than the Rose,* which Briffault reviewed so shrewdly in THE NEW MASSES, Robert Forsythe has a suggestive discussion of the novel. He points out that there are a number of first-rate autobiographies that might have been bad novels and innumerable mediocre novels that could have been first-rate autobiographies. The essay, however, is not primarily a plea for autobiography, but a call for a new form that will permit the full utilization of all of an author's resources.

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Europa is completely a case in point. I was struck, for example, by the banality of the dialogue and the general lack of stylistic distinction. I have always thought of Briffault as a brilliant writer, but I caught only flashes of his brilliance in *Europa.* Glancing at the new edition of *Breakdown,* I discovered the explanation. Briffault is a rhetorician, a master of eloquent exposition and argumentation. Would it not have been infinitely better if he had handled the material in *Europa*—material out of his own experience that it was very important to record—in a form that would have permitted him to use his rhetorical skill instead of cramping himself by employing conventional narrative and dialogue? More important, would it not have been better if he could have utilized his vast intellectual equipment. He is an eminent scientist, one of the few Marxists in the western world whose Marxism has a scientific foundation. (Reading *Anti-Dühring,* one realizes how important that is.) How much of his scientific Marxist insight he had to shut out of *Europa* because the novel-form made no place for it!

These are somewhat ungracious reflections on an exciting and illuminating novel. I hope they will deter no one from reading *Europa.* If much of Briffault is omitted, there is enough of the man in the book to make it rewarding reading. But all of Briffault is not here, and if the novel will not contain all of a Briffault, then, within limits of course, Forsythe is right—"Down with the novel!"

GRANVILLE HICKS.

A Connecticut Valley

THE VALLEY, by Nathan Asch. Macmillan Company. New York. 232 pp. $2.50.

ALTHOUGH it is now not as generally recognized as it should be, the work of Nathan Asch has been one of the first anticipations of the type of writing that is now being done by various of our so-called younger and Left writers. He happens to have been one of the first American novelists to have set out with the aim of attaining in his novels a sense of streets, a sense of people on streets and cluttered into subways and crowded into speakeasies, a suggestion of the way an institution like an office organizes the life of a group of white-collar bread winners and tends, almost, to drain into itself their hopes, their aspirations of life. His first novel, *The Office,* written at the age of twenty-one tells us what happens to a group of people working in a Wall Street brokerage office on the day that that office fails. It opens with what is unquestionably one of the best pieces of writing Nathan Asch has ever done, an impressionistic description of the boom-time office that is, in effect, symphonic. There follows a series of short stories detailing the manner in which every person in the office, from top to bottom, meets this unexpected collapse of a small world. This novel gave one a greater awareness of an office as an institution canalizing the lives of white-collar workers and concomitantly it possessed more of a feeling of people, more of a sense of life.

Another of Asch's novels, *Payday,* had the unfortunate history of meeting the Sumners head on, just when it had begun to sell and it was more or less forcibly withdrawn from publication. Now, it is scarcely available, although five thousand or more copies were quickly sold before its withdrawal. *Payday* tells what happens to a clerk on his payday which happens by coincidence to be the precise day on which Sacco and Vanzetti are executed. We see this clerk, Jim Cowan, setting out from his office with his pay envelope, wanting, hoping that on this night, something wonderful will happen to him. We see what he thinks, what small incidents jut into his conscience, what irritations, plans and expectations he has on the subway, at home, on the street going to meet his date, in the movies, in a speakeasy, in a taxi and so on until he ends up home, drunk and disappointed, his money squandered, his night turned into emptiness. As a whole, the novel was a vividly, in parts even brilliantly, written *tour de force* and now, in addition, we can see that it was suggestive of the kind of writing that was to come.

Nathan Asch's latest book, *The Valley,* in aim, idea and feeling, if not completely in structure, is a departure off a side-road from his previous novels, unless *Love in Chartres,* which I have not read, anticipates it. *The Valley,* itself, is the theme of the book. And the valley is as much a mood as it is a locale. The valley is a spot in New England that is slowly falling into decay and desuetude. The people in it are old, grumbling and even senescently awaiting death. The memories of days when it flourished tend to relax and become half-accurately remembered incidents and the bases for the legends that are persisting in a community where the economic base of its existence has crumbled and where the people live in a cumulatively extending isolation. In the valley marriages and births are supplanted by deaths. The mood of the valley is expressed in a series of short stories, incidents, prose poems, anecdotes and characterizations and they are welded together by their similarity of background, by the author himself telling us of his perception of this scattered phenomena, his impressions of it, even the manner in which it has come to his apprehension. So we meet here, dying old maids, a dishonorably discharged army officer turned bootlegger, his gaudy and vulgar wife, the Briggs family, father and daughter, the father devoting himself to vain verbal tirades upon the rich New Yorkers who have settled in the valley, the Hendersons, the daughter Sue, endlessly doing the work of a man, if not of several, a whole catalogue of characters who would be in such a locale and of artists and odd eccentrics who would happen into it. This series of stories is broken by an interlarding of prose poems or lyrical sketches, introducing the change of the seasons, the budding of spring and the thaw into rutty muds, the growing, parching heat of the summer, the turning of the leaves and then, the advance of snow and blizzards isolating the community completely, so that even for long periods the rural-free-delivery mail man cannot deliver the few letters that drop into the community. And in the end, the death of the valley is interrupted by a new road dotted with hot dog stands.

Like the two previous volumes of Nathan Asch's which I have referred to in this review, there is a noticeable world of talent displayed in this book, a talent which many of our Left writers can well recognize and even envy. As in both *The Office* and *Payday,* there are excellent scenes and stories. There is also noticeable in it the danger and the kind of deficiency that one perceives in nearly all collective novels so-called—an unevenness. In any novel where there is a profusion of characters, where an institution, a locale, a mood is the integrating factor, the author faces the difficulty of straining himself constantly to gain a maximum effect almost for every line that he writes. He cannot, as one can in a straight novel, organized around one character, throw away lines, paragraphs, pages, even chapters. For there is presented to the reader a succession of characters and if each is not presented with a close approximation to perfection, the result is a confusion and fogginess. And this deficiency is, I think, noticeable in almost every so-called collective novel that has been written by contemporary American writers, in Dos Passos' novels, in Robert Cantwell's *The Land of Plenty,* in William Rollins' derivation from Dos Passos, *The Shadow Before,* in Edwin Seaver's *The Company. The Valley,* then, is an irregular book, shifting from key to key, as it were, from a feeling for the change of seasons, to a characterization of old maids, to a passing and relatively transient description of an automobile that ran by a miracle, to an extremely well done account of a young Irish romantic who is born to be a picturesque failure as a writer and as a human being. In place of substance, there is mood. Mood is rarely sufficient to endow a book with a consistent and major importance. Thus *The Valley* does not possess what might be termed a hard impact. To repeat, it tends to be a book of mood, rather than substance, deliberately so; and behind it, there is ability, tenderness.

On the whole then, *The Valley,* is an interlude in Nathan Asch's books, a sideroad of impressions and feelings that well deserved expression, and that stands between his concern with a sense of white-collar New York and the sense of America that he will seek to establish in the novel he is now writing.

JAMES T. FARRELL.

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"Peasants"—A Soviet Triumph

ROBERT FORSYTHE

IN all possible ways I am the right person to be reviewing *Peasants* because with the exceptions of two pictures seen on my vacation I have stayed religiously away from the cinema for months. One picture seen in a little Vermont town was *Love Me Forever* with Grace Moore, which if not the worst picture ever filmed is a certain indication that judgment has left me entirely. The point I am making is one I have made often before: to wit, that familiarity with motion pictures breeds tolerance. Coming upon them after a long absence, one is likely to blink the eye and be amazed that such nonsense can be accepted peaceably by human beings. After a period of regular attendance, the spectator begins to make the comparisons which are fatal to his intellectual integrity. He begins to convince himself that while the particular movie before him is awful, it is not worse than something seen last week.

In brief, I should be prepared to feel that *Peasants* was nothing but an ordinary Soviet program picture, fit for proletarians and maniacs who have been misled by the Comintern. The plight of my friends, the New York newspaper reviewers, was even more complicated than my own by reason of the appearance on the same day with *Peasants* of Marion Davies' *Page Miss Glory,* which naturally required first attention. It will be difficult for them to live down the memory and I refrain from adding to their miseries by predicting that their grandchildren will not rest happy under such a pall. The truth is that *Peasants* is a masterpiece. Not the best picture of the year; not the finest production of the Soviet new season; not the most successful example of the new Soviet screen technique. I mean none of these mealy things. I mean that *Peasants* belongs among the great motion pictures of all time. It is an achievement of stupendous proportions because it succeeds in dramatizing ideas rather than adventures. To those who complain that it is slow moving, I can only answer that John Erskine might have written a more sprightly *Growth of the Soil,* but thank God Hamsun did it.

In its more rounded form, *Peasants* is the supreme drama of collectivization. More concretely it is the story of a pig farm. Ordinarily, I am not attracted to pig farms. Until I had seen *Peasants* I would have resented the idea that I could have the slightest interest in a pig farm. Friedrich Ermler, the director, won the Order of Lenin and gets the Grand Badge of Forsythe for what he has done in this picture.

The beginning is confusing. After an opening in the barn when the news comes that the pigs are to be killed or taken away because the farm can't feed them, it shifts to a meeting of the kolhoz, where all is in an uproar. The spectator is likely to resent his inability to pick out the heroes and villains immediately. It is only later that he realizes his bewilderment is matched by the befuddlement of the farm workers at the seemingly contradictory forces. Thinking that they are doing the only thing possible in the circumstances, the peasants distribute the pigs, while a few of the more loyal and clear-headed members try to keep the drove together. Good intentions are no guide; there are bitter fights between peasants who have only the best interests of the farm at heart. It is only with the appearance of the political representative from the tractor station, that order is restored. Ermler is superb in showing that the machinations of the kulaks are not the slinking treacheries of the usual stage villains but the subtle guiding of willing workers with wrong advice.

But there is no justice in spoiling the story for those who are yet to see it. The loyal girl (E. Younger) is married to a man whose hatred of collectivization is a profound and pathological thing. His father has been exiled to Siberia, his brother has been shot for killing a peasant on a collective farm, his mother yearns only for the day when she can have her old individual farm back. Ermler is fair. The cards are not stacked. Not only does he show the man as an intelligent and sincere believer in his ideas but he allows the spectator to sympathize with him. It is a problem. Is it to be the old Russia with its cruelties and black superstitions and hopelessness (the kulaks having, indeed, a better life than they will temporarily have under collectivization) or is new Russia to go forward, even if the road onward is rocky with difficulties? It is a fair problem and it is handled honestly. The result is a human and dramatic document so powerfully and fundamentally moving that there are only a few motion pictures within memory which remotely compare with it. I will not mention

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the Hollywood product, even the finest Hollywood product. There is no fair comparison.

There is no salty, colorful central character such as Chapayev but it is not needed and indeed would be incongruous in a picture based on collectivization. Always the farm is there and the people who belong to it. We have the girl and her tortured husband, her brother, the tractor agent and dozens of peasant characters looking as if they stepped fresh from a photograph by David Octavus Hill, the old Scottish master. The scenes in the clubhouse are so human, so warming, so jolly and real that I will never again think of a farm without centering all my thoughts on Ermler's peasants. These are the people who, according to reports of hostile Soviet visitors, never smile, never laugh—who will never again enjoy themselves as human beings. If that is true, the very least we can agree upon is that they are surpassingly fine actors. Not only do they laugh but I have heard no heartier laughter in years than that which came from the audience on the second night at the Cameo Theatre at the episode where the men eat dumplings until it seems they must pop.

What is it about these people which makes them so human and palpitantly real? If they are merely actors, why is it that they convince me so completely that they were never off a farm in their lives? Nothing is idealized, nothing is glossed over by Ermler. When the girl is accidentally killed by the husband who becomes literally terrified at her dreams of a child who will carry on the common work of the farm, there follows a scene of horror which might have been taken out of an old Russian novel but which, in the circumstances of the man's state, seemed so inevitable and brutally logical that, in retrospect, it would have been difficult to conceive of anything else he might have done. What I am saying is that *Peasants* is flawlessly right in feeling and mood and temper. It is a great work of art and a triumph for the Soviet screen.

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Between Ourselves

LESTER COHEN is the author of *Sweepings* and *The Great Bear*. He has recently returned from a trip around the world and the article on Palestine in this issue will form part of a book he is preparing. Another section, "In a Soviet Prison" was published in THE NEW MASSES last February. The drawings accompanying Cohen's article are part of an exhibition by Saul Raskin which will go on at the Grand Central Galleries in October.

Michael Blankfort has been in the Middle West, studying conditions and his first report will appear next week, in an article called "Two Years of Drought, One of Rust," depicting the situation in South Dakota.

The author of the "Letter from Germany" in this issue is an American university professor and a close student for many years of German economy.

The story by Nancy Bedford-Jones, "My Father Is a Liar," printed in last week's issue attracted nation-wide attention. The United Press sent a story out over its wire service and many newspapers used it. In New York, however, the papers failed to notice it, except for The Daily News, which carried the story in an early edition and then killed it. Brooklyn and New Jersey papers considered it news and carried it as such, however.

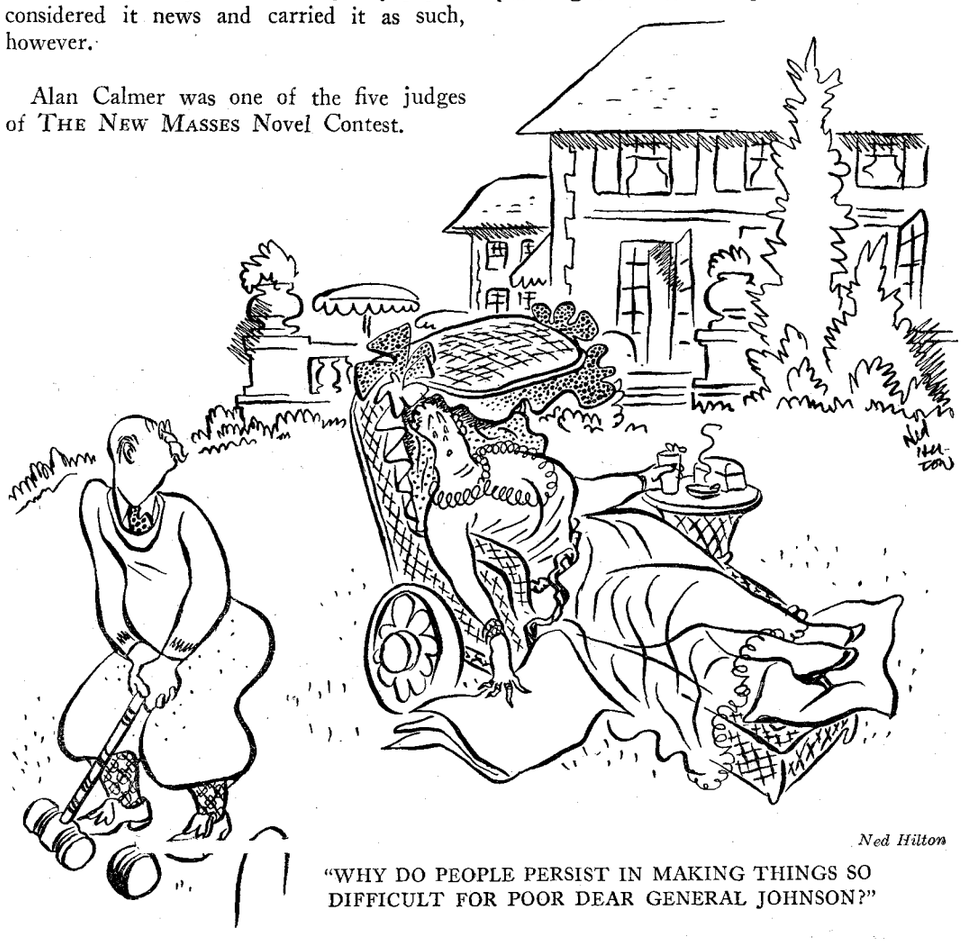
Alan Calmer was one of the five judges of THE NEW MASSES Novel Contest.

Joshua Kunitz's cables (last week's letter came by wire also) have a way of arriving just at press time, which makes it difficult to provide any regular place for them. We are taking this up with Kunitz, who apparently decided, quite correctly, that what is happening in the Soviet Union is spot news and should be sent at the last minute and the fastest way.

James T. Farrell is at work on the first volume of a new tetralogy. His next book to be published is called *Guillotine Party and Other Stories*. Included in it is *Comedy Cop*, which we published several weeks ago.

Granville Hicks is devoting all his time to his forthcoming biography of John Reed. He has sent us a long poem, the last written by Reed and hitherto unpublished, entitled "America, 1918." We will publish it in our issue of October 15, in connection with the anniversary of Reed's death.

Nev Campbell spent many years on the road as a migratory worker. He writes that our recent short-story number made him remember "Shorty and Oscar" and he reached down into his trunk and pulled them out by the scruff of their necks. Campbell has a pet aversion, incidentally: Jim Tully. He is planning to write us a piece about him.



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CHECK YOUR OWN

Symptoms

- ☐ Are you sick of pay cuts, tax bills, run-arounds and demagogues?
- ☐ Have you lost your appetite for the honeyed words of the master chatterer in the White House?
- ☐ Are you bored with the prostitute press which feeds you on canned releases cooked up in the propaganda kitchens of Wall Street and Washington?
- ☐ Does your blood pressure go skyrocketing at the ravings of one Hugh S. Johnson, as he goes blatantly about his business of lowering the living standards and trying to break the spirit of American workers?
- ☐ Does it give you a tremendous pain to see the overworked "Red scare" dragged out on each fresh occasion when workers attempt to better their conditions?
- ☐ Does the fanfare of war ring sickeningly in your ears, and make you ache to do your part to prevent it?
- ☐ Are you fed up on a system which sets $14 a week as a family standard of living, and says those who don't like it can starve or go to jail?
- ☐ Are you irritated by your friends who admit that things are pretty bad, but hope they'll be able to escape without having to do anything about it?
- ☐ Can you stand the glaring light of truth as it exposes the crookedness and the desperation of the whole capitalist set-up?
- ☐ Are you hungry for a magazine that refuses to cater or compromise, edited and written by people who know the motives and meaning of the fascist demagogic policies they attack?
- ☐ Does it make your heart beat faster when we tell you that thousands of others who have felt as you do, have subscribed to NEW MASSES, that very stimulating revolutionary weekly?

Check over the symptoms to the right. How do YOU feel? If you find just one of them fits your case, YOU NEED NEW MASSES — REGULARLY. It will not only cure you, but it will help you to analyze the world's depression, and do something about that, too.

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